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"IF YOU DO NOT LEAVE THE HOUSE AT ONCE, I'LL SHOOT YOU DEAD!" SAID ELFRIDA WITH A MEANING GESTURE.

## A MYSTERIOUS HOUSEHOLD.

### [A NOVELETTE.]

#### CHAPTER I.

It was an evening early in June, and the London season was in full swing.

The Derby had been run that day, and the victory of an "outsider" over the heavily-backed favourite was the theme of the hour.

In one of the clubs mostly frequented by the *jeunesse dorée* of the metropolis, two men were still seated at the table where they had been dining, a bottle of claret stood between them, and some glasses, together with a box of cigars for both were smoking.

"You look deucedly glum, old boy," said the elder of the two breaking a pause. "What's up?"

The other—a tall, fair, distinguished-looking young fellow of five or six-and-twenty—knocked the ash off the end of his cigar with a deliberation that may have indicated embarrassment, and

for a few minutes did not speak, then laughing rather mirthlessly he said,—

"I'm sure I don't know why I shouldn't tell you the truth, Craven, since, by to-morrow it will be in everybody's mouth. The long and short of it is I am ruined—stone broke."

Mr. Craven lifted his eyebrows with some consternation, but did not look altogether taken by surprise.

"Sorry to hear it old chappie, but perhaps you exaggerate. Things may not be quite so bad as you suppose. You've been going the pace pretty rapidly of late, I know, but you started with a rattling good balance at your bankers, and it seems to me almost impossible it can be all gone yet—unless, indeed, you have had some uncommon bad luck."

Captain Herbert Dalrymple groaned.

"Bad luck!" he repeated, "I've had the devil's own luck. Who on earth would have expected that wretched outsider to come to the post to-day, while Stonygate made a bad third?"

"Ah," Craven gave a low whistle, indicating comprehension. "I see how it is. You have been backing Stonygate."

"Heavily. I had expected to make a pot of

money on the event, and I backed him as long as I could get the odds taken. It seemed so sure—so absolutely safe, that I looked upon it as a dead certainty. And now—well, how I shall pay my debts, Heaven only knows."

He took his cigar from his lip, and stared moodily out of the window, watched with quiet attention by his companion.

Craven was sorry for him, but Craven had lived for many years in a world that is not greatly touched by the woes of its neighbours, and his sympathy did not in the least interfere with his enjoyment of the excellent "La rose" before him.

Besides, he never betted himself, and he was rather of opinion that the young man had made a very complete fool of himself, over the Stonygate business.

"Have you sold all the S—shire property that you inherited from your mother?" he asked presently.

"All except the Red Lodge, and that I wanted to keep. But it'll have to go now—there's no alternative, and even then, I shall only just be able to get straight. I suppose I shall have to sell out and emigrate. It's the only thing left

for me," he added, moodily, as he pulled hard at his fair moustache.

"And Lady Adeline?"

The young man's face flushed a deep red, he moved his chair uneasily.

"I haven't seen her yet," he returned. "We were all going to the Oaks on Friday, but now it's out of the question. By the way, I promised to go to their dance to-night. I shall have to keep my engagement, I suppose, though Heaven knows I don't feel much like dancing."

"My dear fellow," the other one said, as he rose, "life consists, for the most part, in doing things for which we have no special inclination, and in hiding the fact that this is the case. Of course, you will have to go to the Countess's dance, as you have booked yourself for it, but let me give you a bit of advice." He laid his hand kindly on the younger man's arm. "Don't be too cut up if Lady Adeline gives you the cold shoulder!"

Dalrymple grew paler. His first impulse was clearly one of resentment, but he conquered it, and said, with a forced laugh,—

"What, you think she'll throw me over when she hears that my face is my fortune?"

Craven shrugged his shoulders.

"I would only remind you that that applies equally to the lady herself. You can hardly expect a society beauty to sacrifice her career for the sake of a man who has ruined himself on the turf. Besides, you are not actually engaged to her?"

"No, not actually engaged, only . . ." He broke off abruptly, and began putting on his light summer overcoat. Soon afterwards, he and his companion were walking slowly down Piccadilly, and it was not until the early hours of the morning that he found himself in his chambers again. His man was sitting up for him, but he dismissed him immediately, and after his departure, sat for some time quite still, his elbow on his knees, and his head in his hands, thinking over the events of the evening.

Craven was right, and Lady Adeline had given him the cold shoulder. She had danced with him it is true, and had smiled in his face in the old, charming way; but there was something in her smile that had never been there before, a coldness and conventionality, which was shared by her voice and manner, and it told him as plainly as words, that she had already heard of his position, and was warning him that all must be at an end between them.

He had taken the warning. There had been no scene, no farewell, no explanation, but he knew he was dismissed and he accepted his dismissal.

He was thinking it all over, when the little carriage clock on the mantel-piece struck three, and he noticed for the first time that the cold grey dawn was making its way through the closed blinds.

He rose slowly, and went to his dressing-room. In one of the drawers of his wardrobe was a small mahogany case which he drew out and unlocked. It contained a revolver—a pretty, silver mounted, innocent looking toy enough, at which he looked doubtfully for some time, fidgeting it restlessly, even lunging.

Finally, however, he restored it to its place, and locked it up again.

"That would be a cowardly way out of it," he said to himself. "I must keep it for a last resource. If I can only sell the 'Red Lodge' for enough to pay my debts, and clear my honour, I don't mind what follows. I can rough it in the Wild West, or out in the bush. To-morrow I'll go down to the Lodge, and see if I can't come to terms with old Surtees."

And with this sensible reflection, he threw himself on a couch, and soon dropped into an uneasy slumber. It did not last long, however, and before seven o'clock, he was up again, and busy writing letters. He had an interview with his solicitor, dismissed his valet, packed a small Gladstone bag, and then started for Paddington, whence he took a ticket for the station nearest to the Red Lodge.

It was about six o'clock when he arrived at his destination. He was the only passenger who alighted, and on looking round, he found no sign of cab, or indeed, any other vehicle. One solitary

porter stood at the rose-wreathed gate ready to take his ticket, and to him he addressed himself,—

"Do you know where the Red Lodge is?"

"You mean old Surtees's house?"

Dalrymple nodded assent, and the porter scratched his head ruminatively before he answered.

"It's a matter of four mile—maybe five. Be you agoin' there?"

His tone expressed surprise, and he looked the stranger well over from head to foot, as if he found something very curious either in his errand or his appearance.

"I am. Why, are you astonished?"

"Oh, well, I dunno. Only they never has visitors at the Red Lodge—the old man's too jolly stingy for that, he is, I hope you've got your supper with you, sir?" and with this remark, and a broad grin on his face, the man slouched off, while Herbert began his walk along the quiet country road, in the direction pointed out to him.

The property was one that had been left him by his mother, and it was for this reason that he had always refused to sell it. It was not extensive, but it was supposed to be rather valuable on account of its situation; and its present occupier had, of late, been constantly writing to the young man, requesting to buy it. Herbert himself had never seen it before, consequently when he came to an empty lodge and a pair of gates on which its name was written in faded red characters, he looked at it rather curiously, before he passed through. The house itself was a not very large red brick building at the end of an avenue of trees, with old-fashioned mullioned windows, and an oak door studded with iron nails. What chiefly struck Herbert in it was its gloom.

Perhaps this was partly accounted for by the creepers that had been allowed to smother it, and also by the very bad state of repair in which it was kept. Green stains suggestive of damp, meandered down the walls, some of the chimneys had fallen in, and their scattered masonry lay on the terrace below, while the greater part of the windows were barred, and those that were not, had been rendered pretty well daylight proof by undisturbed layers of dust.

Dalrymple pulled hard at the rusty hanging bell, which gave forth a loud and hollow sound that echoed and re-echoed through the house. At first no notice was taken of the summons, and he was inclined to believe the place empty, but just as he was on the point of turning away, he heard the undrawing of the bolts, and the door was held open sufficiently for him to catch a glimpse in the aperture of the queerest vision he had ever beheld—a girl's slight figure that looked as if it had stepped out of the last century. Her clothes were certainly made in the fashion of more than fifty years ago—a brownish camlet dress, very short waisted, a black stuff apron, black mittens on the hands and arms—for the sleeves of the gown were short—slippers with sandals, and a mob cap crowning a twist of brown hair. Her face would have been pretty but for its expression of sullen gloom.

For a few seconds Dalrymple stared at this extraordinary creature in an astonishment that held him speechless. Her voice, sharp and petulant, recalled him to himself.

"What is your business?"

"I wish to see Mr. Surtees," he returned, more taken aback than he had ever been in his life before.

She eyed him cautiously from top to toe, half hesitating whether to admit him or not.

"Mr. Surtees doesn't see anybody," she said at last.

"I think he will make an exception in my favour if you will be good enough to take this to him," politely returned Herbert, as he handed her a card, which she read.

"So you are Captain Dalrymple," she observed, regarding him with fresh curiosity. If her manner had not been so perfectly naive and simple, it would have been rude. "Does the old man expect you?"

"No."

"Why didn't you write and tell him you were coming?"

For the life of him, Herbert could not restrain a smile.

"Don't you think that is my business?" he asked, good humouredly, whereupon a bright red flamed up into her pale cheeks, and she banged the door in his face, drawing one of the bolts with ostentatious energy, in order that he might hear it. Immediately afterwards there came the sound of her high heels click-clacking on the stone-paved halls, and gradually dying away in the distance, while he still stood in the ivy-covered porch, uncertain whether to retreat or not, and extremely puzzled by the strangeness of his reception.

While he was still hesitating the bolts were once more withdrawn, and the girl again stood on the threshold.

"He says you are to come in," she remarked, very ungraciously, moving on one side to let him pass, and re-fastening the door after he had entered. "Follow me, and I'll take you to him."

Dalrymple obeyed, and in her wake, he traversed the long bare passages, until he came to an inner hall, from which a couple of doors opened. It was dreary, cold, and unfurnished; and though not actually dirty, it bore every sign of neglect, and even on this June evening, struck a chill to the visitor, who shivered slightly as he passed through. The girl—whose bright dark eyes nothing seemed to escape—observed the movements, and grinned at him mockingly.

"You were very anxious to get in," she said, her voice lowered to a sibilant whisper; "but now you are here, you'd be glad enough to get out again, I guess?"

He ignored the remark, although to himself he confessed its truth. There was certainly something uncanny in the atmosphere of the place, and not least in the girl herself, with her elfin looks, her witch-like appearance, and her malicious smiles, as she stood for a moment on the old sack that did duty for a mat, and then threw the door open.

She made no attempt to announce him, and he passed in to find himself in a long, low room, looking out on the kitchen-garden. A faded strip of carpet covered the middle of the floor, and on it stood a writing-table with shabby, ink-splashed top, and several roomy drawers.

In a round-backed library chair sat a man who presented as quaint an appearance in his way, as the girl did in hers. He was not really old—hardly sixty in fact—but constant poring over his account-books had given him stooping shoulders, and his thin face had the sickly pallor of one who goes very little in the open air. His thin grey hair was pushed untidily back behind his ears, his chin had on it the stubble of several days growth, and his hands, as he rose and supported himself by the back of the chair, looked like vulture's claws. For attire, he wore a very old and extremely shabby dressing-gown, reaching to his feet, and tied round the waist with a frayed cord girdle.

"How do you do, Captain Dalrymple, how do you do?" he said, summoning up a smile of welcome to his face, and holding out his hand. "I am very glad to see you, sir. Take a seat, and when we are alone we will discuss the subject on which I wrote to you. You may go, Elfrida," he added, frowning at the girl.

"Aren't you going to offer your visitor some refreshments?" she said—and from her smiles Dalrymple saw that the suggestion was made, not so much on his behalf, as with the view of annoying the old man. "He has walked from the station, remember, and it's a good long way."

"Nonsense, nonsense—a mere nothing to a strong young man like the captain. However, you can get some tea ready, if you like," he added, with evident reluctance, as he drew some keys from his pocket, and bade them to her. To his relief Dalrymple declined the tea, and presently Elfrida left the room.

"A tiresome girl—a very tiresome girl," he muttered, shaking his head as the door closed behind her. "All women are tiresome, but she is one of the worst of them."

"Is she your daughter?" asked Dalrymple. "My stepdaughter. Her mother was a widow when I married her, she died seven or eight years

ago. I have no daughters of my own, and only one son by the first marriage. He looks after the farm for me. A clever chap, Silas, very! If money's to be made, he'll make it. But times are very bad," he continued, whining, "it's just as much as we can manage to make a living out of the farm."

"And yet you are anxious to buy it?" observed Dalrymple, drily.

"Because we thought it might pay us better than finding the rent year after year. It's a heavy rent, Captain Dalrymple, very heavy—more than the place is worth."

"Excuse me, that is hardly correct," returned the young officer. "You will remember that the rent was lowered when your lease was renewed, some years ago, and, as a matter of fact, I am informed on very good authority, that you pay considerably less than the farm is worth."

"It's a mistake, sir, quite a mistake, I assure you. The land is very poor, and the house is inconvenient. Besides," he added, with a leer, "they do say the place is haunted; and if I were to leave, you would find it very difficult to get another tenant. Not that I intend leaving. I have lived here for over ten years, and I want to end my days here. That's why I wrote to you about purchasing, and I suppose that's the object of your visit."

"It is. I have made up my mind to part with the property. What is the offer you are prepared to make?"

The old man hummed and hawed for a bit, keeping his sharp eyes fixed on his visitor, then suggested the sum of four thousand pounds, remarking as he did so, that he was offering considerably more than the place was worth, only he had grown fond of it, and did not wish to leave it.

This, as Herbert was perfectly aware, was all nonsense, moreover he was inclined to think that the estate would fetch more in the open market.

Still it was an object with him to avoid the delay that would be occasioned by a sale by auction, and he was willing to sacrifice something in order to get possession of the money at once.

Surtees, seeing his hesitation, endeavoured to persuade him to close immediately, but some last remnant of prudence made the young man say,—

"I think I had better look over the property, I will do so in the morning, and then give you an answer."

His companion's face fell, and he began biting viciously at his nails—a trick of his when he was angry or impatient.

When he spoke again it was to endeavour to persuade Dalrymple to sign the agreement that very evening. But there was a vein of obstinacy in Herbert, and he stuck to his resolution.

"In that case you had better stay the night here," observed the old man, evidently much disappointed at his non-success. "We can give you a bed, and it will save you your walk back to W—"

At first Herbert demurred; but his host became so pressing that he could not continue his refusal without actual rudeness, so he finally gave in, and asked if he might go at once to the offered room—for his long journey had made a "wash and brush up" a necessity.

"Certainly, certainly, I'll show you the way," answered Mr. Surtees, with ogre-like cheerfulness, and he crossed the carpet to the door, his footsteps soft and noiseless as those of a cat.

As he opened it some one, whose ear had been applied to the keyhole, fell forward into the room. It was the girl, Elfrida.

"Ah, you hussy, as I've caught you, have I!" cried the old man, fiercely, "I'll teach you to listen at keyholes—I'll let you know what you'll get for trying to pry into business that don't concern you!"

He lifted the thick ash he carried, and was on the point of striking the girl when Herbert took two strides forward, and snatched from him the stick, which he broke into a couple of pieces, and threw into the fireplace.

For a moment the old man glared at him, his cheeks blanched, his lips moving with an unuttered curse, his whole form trembling with rage. Herbert met his glance unmoved.

"You will thank me later on for saving you from a cowardly action," he said, quietly, while the girl, who had risen to her feet, and stood defiantly awaiting the expected blow, looked first at one, and then at the other, breaking into a mocking laugh as she turned away.

"She is a shameless hussy!" exclaimed Surtees, partly recovering himself. "Here do I feed and clothe her, and provide her with a home, and she repays me with base ingratitude, like the viper she is. But she comes of a viper's brood, and the only thing to be done with her is to take out her sting—to take out her string," he added, half to himself, as he led the way up the uncarpeted stairs.

## CHAPTER II.

WHEN Herbert came down, after making his toilet, he found tea set on the table, and the room occupied by Mr. Surtees, and his son Silas—a heavy browed, but rather handsome man, tall, and strong, with restless eyes, whose furtive glances were not prepossessing.

During the meal, which in addition to homemade bread and butter, consisted of eggs and bacon—Herbert felt that he was being watched both by father and son, and, in spite of his self-possession, the knowledge made him a little uncomfortable.

The conversation turned for the most part on the deterioration of land, and how prices had gone down in the neighbourhood, a fact strongly insisted on by both the Surtees, with a view of impressing on this landlord that he must not ask too much money for his estate!

Elfrida did not appear until tea was over, and then she quietly slipped in and removed the tray. Her eyes flashed defiantly at old Surtees in a way that showed she had by no means forgiven his threats, whilst as to the son, and Captain Dalrymple, she simply ignored them.

Herbert found himself watching her with some interest. She moved so quickly and deftly, her fingers, in spite of their slenderness seemed so strong, and her appearance in her grotesque attire was so striking, that involuntarily she exercised a species of fascination over him.

After she had disappeared, he stated his intention of going for a walk, whereupon Silas, exchanging a rapid glance of intelligence with his father, offered to accompany him, and the young officer had no alternative but to comply, although he would much rather have gone alone.

It was nearly ten o'clock when they returned, and the house was in darkness save for the lamp burning in the sitting-room. A candle was placed in readiness for the visitor, and as the host gave it into his hands, he said with a chuckle,—

"We always keep early hours at the Red Lodge—no sitting up till day-light like your fashionable London gentlemen!"

Herbert was not sorry to withdraw, though he did not think it at all likely he would get to sleep at such an unusually early hour. His room, which was at the end of a long corridor, was a great barn-like apartment, with oak-panelled walls, and a low ceiling, a four-post bedstead, also in carved oak stood in the middle, and a washstand, hanging glass, and a couple of chairs completed the furniture. The tallow candle he had brought up with him, threw a small circle of light on the bare oak boards, but beyond its radius, the shadows gathered thickly, and he could almost have fancied once or twice that he saw ghostly shapes moving amongst them.

He laughed at his own folly, undressed quickly, and got into bed, but sleep seemed an impossibility. His thoughts were busy with the members of this strange household—the miserly old man, the heavy-browed, sullen-looking son, the witch-like girl with the flashing eyes, and her defiant manner.

The old man must be rich, he chose to live in a large house, and cultivate some acres of land, and yet he kept no servant. He dressed like a veritable tramp, and from his appearance, might almost be suspected of half-starving himself. Dalrymple could not make out why he had been asked to stay the night, as such an invitation

necessarily included two meals. That there was a motive for it he felt convinced.

He heard a distant church clock strike eleven, then twelve, then one. By this time, his candle had gone out, so it was impossible to read the batch of newspapers and magazines he had brought down from London with him—he had told Craven the night before that he was "stone broke," but that had not prevented his indulging in his usual small luxuries. At last he jumped out of bed, and went to the window, the shutters of which he threw wide open, thus letting a brilliant flood of moonlight into the room.

It was an exquisite night, the gardens below, neglected and overgrown as they were, looked like fairyland in the silver radiance in which they were steeped, while the distant river, winding in and out amongst its green banks gleamed in wreath-like clouds of white mist. A sudden desire to be out in the open air came upon the young man, and without more ado, he dressed himself all but his boots, and carrying these in his hand, let himself out of his room, and proceeded softly down the corridor.

But the geography of the house was more puzzling than he imagined, and, instead of reaching the stairs, he found himself in a dark passage from which there seemed to be no outlet. He was just on the point of turning back, when his ear caught the sound of faint silvery music which seemed to proceed from the end of the passage, and he stopped in amazement, half doubting the evidence of his own senses.

For a little while he stood quite still, listening to the sounds, which seemed like those produced by small bells; then he walked cautiously to the end of the passage, and found himself confronted by a door which was slightly ajar. Pushing it a little wider open, he looked through, and his amazement redoubled at the scene before him.

The room was a large one, of octagon shape, and with four windows. Herbert remembered that Silas Surtees had pointed it out as they returned from the walk, and said it was never entered, as it was supposed to be haunted.

Through all these windows the moonlight poured, and in its white sheen danced a figure which might have been that of Queen Mab herself, light, lithe, and slender, clothed from head to foot in white, with a great mass of wavy dark hair hanging down to her waist, and bare arms on which gleamed scarlet bracelets.

She seemed part of the magic of the moonbeams, and the mystery of the night.

Keeping always within the radius of the moonlight, she swayed rhythmically backwards and forwards, waving her arms to and fro in unison with her movements, while the tiny bells on her bracelets tinkled musically, and her bare feet glimmered like ivory.

Evidently she was absorbed heart and soul in her performance, and indeed her dancing showed her to be a born danseuse; it was grace itself, and although the steps may have been unconventional, her movements were instinct with a barbaric freedom, such as could never have been hers if she had been trained.

For some time Herbert gazed at her in a species of fascination, held in thrall by the spell of her irresistible grace, and wondering more and more who she could be.

Her gown, though of the style of half a century ago, was of thick, lustrous satin, embroidered with silver whose tarnish did not show in the soft light, while the sandals on her feet seemed to be of the same date.

Suddenly she paused a moment as if exhausted, and stood perfectly motionless, eyelids drooping, arms falling inertly, her pose that of graceful weariness.

At the same instant Dalrymple saw her face, in which it seemed to him he traced something familiar, although at first he could not tell what it was.

Then it flashed upon him—this girl was none other than Elfrida!

Very silently he withdrew to his room, having no more inclination for a walk, and pondered over the strangeness of the discovery.

It was difficult to reconcile the sulky, defiant, mocking creature of the evening before, in her

grotesque garb, with this fairy-like being, arrayed in white satin, and dancing to the tinkling music of the bells in the silver moonlight; the two seemed utterly different in every way, and yet the features were certainly the same.

Once more Herbert threw himself on the four-post bed, but with a curious feeling of being partly bewitched by this strange household, which was assuredly the most uneasy he had ever had experience of.

In the morning when he went down to breakfast, he looked out eagerly for Elfrida's appearance, but was doomed to disappointment.

The meal was already spread, and old Surtees himself made the tea, while Silas brought in a dish of bacon that had apparently been cooked in the kitchen.

Herbert controlled his curiosity for some time, but at last, he said,—

"What has become of your stepsdaughter?"

"She is in a bad temper, and won't come in," the old man answered with a grin; "a more self-willed vixen never lived. She'll get her own way by hook or by crook, if it's possible."

"Anyhow, she won't be controlled by you," said Silas, maliciously.

An ugly look crossed his father's face.

"I'll be even with her yet," he muttered to himself. "I'll break her spirit, or I'll know the reason why, before I have done with her."

Dalrymple hurried over the meal, and was soon out of doors looking over the estate, again in company with Silas.

Indeed it seemed as if father or son were determined not to let him be out of their sight, and any attempt on his part to speak to the labourers on the farm, was promptly nipped in the bud.

When he returned, Silas went off to his work, after seeing him safely into the parlour, where the old man was sitting in front of his writing table, with an agreement before him.

"Have you made up your mind, Captain?" said Surtees, rubbing his thin hands nervously together. "You'd better take my advice, and close with a good offer. Take my word for it, you won't get a better."

As it happened, Herbert was of the same opinion, for he had been struck by the poorness of the land, and its bad state of cultivation. Besides, as has been said before, he was anxious to obtain the money with as little delay as possible.

"Very well," he said, stretching out his hand for the pen, "I'll sign your agreement, and the purchase can be concluded as soon as you like."

With fingers that trembled, the old man dipped the pen in the ink and handed it to him; then he carefully laid the agreement on a piece of blotting paper, and put it before him ready for his signature.

Herbert was struck by his manner, which was full of suppressed excitement, while his whole form literally quivered with eagerness.

The young man made the first stroke of his name, Surtees leaning over him the while; but there was a hair in the pen, and he paused to wipe it with a scrap of paper. At the same moment the door was thrown open, and Elfrida came in with a dustpan and brush in one hand, and a letter in the other.

"Here's a note for you," she said, tossing it to her stepfather, who snarled a curse at her as he took it, and peremptorily ordered her to leave the room.

She laughed, and seemed prepared to obey, but—whether by accident or design Herbert could not say—she somehow contrived to upset the dustpan and its contents on the faded carpet exactly at the young officer's feet, and in another second was on her knees, engaged in sweeping the litter up again.

"Leave it as it is!" roared Surtees, in the last stage of exasperation. "Can't you see that I'm busy, and don't want to be interrupted? Go at once, I tell you!"

"Here's something of yours on the floor," she said, addressing herself to Dalrymple, and not taking the least notice of her stepfather. As she spoke she held out to him an envelope, she had apparently picked up on the carpet. He was on the point of denying its ownership when he sud-

denly stopped himself, checked by a certain expression in her eyes.

"Thank you," he said taking it and glancing at it before he put it in his pocket. It was unaddressed, but written in pencil, and in large letters were the words,—

"Don't sign."

Without betraying the faintest symptom of emotion, the girl quitted the room, and the door had hardly closed upon her before Surtees once more offered Herbert the pen. But the latter shook his head.

"I have changed my mind, Mr. Surtees. I think it would be unwise to complete the bargain without first obtaining legal advice. I shall therefore go into W— immediately, and consult a lawyer, who will write to you in the morning. Meanwhile I will take my leave of you, with many thanks for your kind hospitality."

The change that came over the old man's face was veritably awful to witness. His skin turned a livid yellow, his lips grew white, his eyes glared.

He tried to speak but no words would come, and finally he sank down on his chair with an expression of baffled malignancy from which Herbert actually recoiled.

### CHAPTER III.

THAT same night Herbert Dalrymple found himself once more in London, but his feelings and indeed his circumstances were widely different from what they had been when he left town, not two days ago.

His visit to Mr. Morwen, the solicitor, had unravelled the mystery of old Surtees' anxiety to buy the Red Lodge, whose value had gone up tremendously in consequence of a projected railway which could cut straight through the farm.

The company were prepared to give ten thousand pounds for part of the property, and Surtees had naturally counted on making an immense profit if he bought the estate from his landlord, and, indeed, would have done so, had not Elfrida interfered to prevent it. This was the reason why he had pressed Dalrymple to stay the night at the Red Lodge, fearing that if he went to W—— he might hear a whisper of the projected railway, and decline to complete the bargain.

As he sat in his chambers smoking an after-dinner cigar, and thinking over the events of the last few days, the young officer came to a very sensible resolution.

He would pay his debts and start fair, but in future he would steer clear of betting and horse-racing—in effect, he would begin his life over again.

Then he thought of Lady Adeline—the beautiful patrician with whom he had fancied himself in love. He fancied it no longer. He had admired her beauty, and been flattered by her attentions; but her behaviour had convinced him that his heart remained untouched.

"And I might never have discovered the truth, but have married her and been unhappy ever after!" he said to himself. "So that, after all, I have something to thank my misfortunes for. As for Elfrida, I owe her a debt of gratitude that I must endeavour to find some method of paying. If it had not been for her I should have taken the four thousand pounds; whereas now I stand to make three times that amount."

Old Surtees' lease of the Red Lodge would not expire till Christmas, so that he would, in any case, remain there for another six months; but in less than a fortnight Herbert had completed his sale of the estate, had paid his debts, and was once more able "to hold his head up," as he expressed it.

In the meantime he had been thinking a good deal of the elfin creature whom he had seen dancing in the moonlight, and who had proved herself such a good friend to him, and his desire to do something for her increased. But the puzzle was as to how he was to begin.

If he presented himself openly at the Red Lodge he would probably not be allowed to enter,

and his championship would, in all likelihood, have a bad effect so far as the girl herself was concerned, as it would lead her stepfather to suspect the part she had played in the sale of the estate.

That she was unhappy seemed more than likely; and, indeed, there was something pitiful in the idea of her young life being passed in the midst of such gloomy surroundings, and in the company of two such unpleasant specimens of humanity, as old Surtees and his son Silas.

Finally, Herbert determined to go down and take his chance of seeing her. Accordingly, one day, some three weeks after his first visit, he found himself once more en route for S——shire, only this time he had taken the precaution of disguising himself in a bushy black beard and wig, which very effectually concealed his identity. He laughed heartily as he looked in the glass at the Corsair-looking reflection it gave back. Even the lynx eye of old Surtees himself would fail to recognise him now!

It was about eight o'clock when he arrived at the Lodge. Instead of going up the avenue to the front door he concealed himself amongst the laurels that made a sort of shrubbery at the back of the house, and in view of the kitchen, where, Cinderella like, he imagined Elfrida spent most of her time.

For nearly half-an-hour he waited without being rewarded by a glimpse of her, then the back door opened, and there issued forth the bent and shrivelled figure of old Surtees, accompanied by his son, on whose arm he leaned. For a minute Herbert was afraid they might be coming his way, in which case they would have been pretty well sure to see him; but to his relief they turned off in the other direction, and walked away at a smart pace that soon took them out of sight.

As soon as the two figures had disappeared he went boldly forward, and peeped into the kitchen, which however was empty. But the window was open, and without more ado, the young man jumped in, forgetting in his impatience to find Elfrida, that his action might be liable to an unfavourable construction.

He had reached the passage outside, and was on the point of calling her name, when he found himself suddenly confronted by the small quaint figure of the girl herself, who had evidently just come downstairs. For a few seconds they stood quite still, facing each other, then, quick as lightning, Elfrida drew from some part of her dress a pistol, and pointed it at him.

"What are you doing here?" she asked in her high clear voice, and without betraying the least symptom of fear. "If you do not leave the house at once, I will shoot you dead," and she looked as if she meant it too!

The idea of being taken for a burglar was so funny that Herbert began to laugh, forgetting that his disguise and the fading light prevented her from recognising him.

"Don't you know me, Elfrida?" he said, making use of her Christian name for the very good reason that he did not know her surname. "I have come to look for you, but I must say I hardly bargained for this kind of reception. What is there about me that made you take me for a thief?"

"Your way of entrance," she returned, coolly replacing the pistol as she recognised his voice. "All the doors are locked, so you must have got in through the kitchen window, which I was just coming down to shut. But what are you wearing that beard for?"

"Because I did not wish anyone but yourself to know I was here."

"Take it off!" she exclaimed, peremptorily, "you look hateful in it."

He obeyed, putting the obnoxious article in his pocket, and Elfrida, who had watched the operation with knitted brows, gave a small sigh of relief. Then her face changed.

"What do you want?" she demanded abruptly, and eyeing him with the same suspicion as on the first occasion of his visit.

"Did I not tell you—I came to see you?"

She looked incredulous, evidently not believing the statement.

"Why should you want to see me?"

"For several reasons, one of which was my wish to express to you my gratitude for the warning you gave me about the sale of this estate."

She laughed mockingly, and shrugged her shoulders.

"As to that, we are quits. What I did was not for your sake, but to spite my stepfather. At the same time I wasn't sorry to do you a good turn, because you tried to save him from beating me the night before. Not that your interference did any real good, for he made it up to me after you had gone."

"You mean to say he struck you?"

"Yes, why shouldn't he?" she returned indifferently.

"But he did not suspect that you had warned me against signing the agreement?"

"I don't know about his suspecting me, but I told him outright I had done so."

"Why did you do that?"

"Because I wanted to aggravate him. I wanted to show him, too, that I had wiped off old scores between us."

She was leaning against the wall as she spoke, her hands folded behind her back, her eyes bright and defiant, the curly masses of her hair pushed back under the curious mob cap she wore. Herbert felt his breath taken away. He had never come across such a girl as this in the whole course of his life, and he hardly knew how to treat her. He was half disgusted, and yet his interest in her was stronger than his disgust. After a moment's silence he said,—

"I suppose it's hardly necessary to ask whether you care for your stepfather?"

"I hate him!" she said in a curious little sort of hiss. "He is mean, cruel, tyrannical, and I have every right to hate him."

"And yet you did your best to defend his property when you thought I was a burglar who had designs on it?"

The sombre fire that had burned in her eyes died out.

"That was a different matter altogether. So long as I am left in charge of the house it's my duty to take care of it. For the rest I shouldn't mind if every penny the old man possessed in the world were stolen from him."

"Was that a real revolver with which you threatened me?"

"Certainly," she returned, opening her eyes wide. "What else should it be?"

"I thought perhaps it was a toy one you had made use of in order to frighten me."

"Nothing of the sort, I always carry it about with me."

"But not loaded, surely?" he exclaimed, in horror.

"No. I keep the cartridges in my pocket, so that I can load it in a second. My stepfather gave it me, in order that I might be able to defend the house when he and Silas are out—as they are to-night, you probably saw them go."

"I did—and waited till they were out of sight before I tried to get in."

"That was wise of you. If they had seen you they certainly wouldn't have let you enter unless it were to give you a cup of poison, and that I think they'd do very heartily."

"I daresay. I did not suppose it likely that I should be welcomed, otherwise I might have come in orthodox fashion."

She was looking at him curiously, her delicately arched brows still raised.

"For my part, I can't understand why you have come at all," she observed, bluntly.

Herbert drew a little nearer, and took her hand.

"Let me explain then, so that you may understand. It struck me that your life here must be very dreary, very miserable, and I was wondering if I could not make it better for you. How should you like to go to school where you would have companions of your own age, and the enjoyments that are natural to it—where you would learn pleasant womanly accomplishments, and no longer be forced to spend all your time in house work as you seem to do here?"

A whimsical sort of amusement expressed itself in her face.

"And who would pay for the school?"

"I should, of course."

"Ah, I see. But do you think Mr. Surtees would agree to this?"

"He might do so, if it were made worth his while."

She shook her head.

"I don't think so. You must remember I am useful to him. No one else would take my place. Besides, do you know how old I am?"

The question took him slightly aback.

He had thought of her as a mere child—a queer, half human, half elfin creature, whom it would be necessary to tame, as one tames a wild thing of the woods.

"Fifteen?" he hazarded, doubtfully.

"I am eighteen," she responded, drawing herself up, with the oddest possible assumption of dignity, "and that is rather old to begin school life. Besides, I am not utterly uneducated. I have read a good many books of one sort or another, and I very much doubt whether I should care for being with a set of ordinary school girls."

"But you cannot pretend that you are happy here?"

She clasped her hands swiftly together, and her whole frame seemed to grow rigid.

"No, no, no!" she cried, vehemently, "I am miserable—utterly miserable. My only pleasure is in making my stepfather suffer some of the pain he makes me suffer. Sometimes I think I shall kill him before I have done with him!"

It is impossible to describe the fervour with which she uttered these words, or the malignancy that sparkled in the depths of her dark eyes.

Her whole being seemed transfused into one longing for revenge.

Herbert drew back in shocked wonderment, feeling indeed, a little helpless before this revelation of a nature which he felt himself quite unable to grapple with.

And yet, there was really nothing so very extraordinary in it, given a girl of high spirit, who has been systematically ill treated, it is hardly to be wondered at that kindly and generous impulses should be turned to a bitter resentment, which expressed itself in wild and savage words.

Before he could find a fitting reply—which would certainly have taken the form of a remonstrance—the great eight day clock in the hall, struck nine, and at the sound Elfrida's expression changed.

"You must go," she said, hurriedly. "They will be back in a few minutes, and it would never do for them to find you here. Come—I will let you out of a little side door, that I use myself sometimes when I don't want them to know I have left the house."

She led the way down a narrow passage, he following.

When they came to the door, he said,—

"But I must see you again before I go back!"

She looked at him doubtfully half hesitating.

"I don't know that it will do any good. When shall you return to London?"

"I have not made up my mind. I shall go to W—to-night, and sleep there, and very likely I may remain in this part of the world for a week or ten days."

"Then you can come over here to-morrow night, and I'll meet you. Do you know the old granary?"

He nodded assent.

"Very well, then, be there at about eight o'clock, and I'll come if I can. Put your beard on, but remember it's not much good if you can't contrive to change your voice while you wear it."

And with this parting shot and without giving him an opportunity for a reply, she closed the door and locked it behind him.

#### CHAPTER IV.

THE next evening Herbert was at the old granary, as he had been bidden.

The outbuildings of the Red Lodge were rambling and extensive, but very little use of them

was made by the Surtees, who rarely or ever visited them.

It was dusk before Elfrida arrived, gliding along like a ghost in the twilight, with an old white shawl wrapped round her head.

She seemed in a gentler and more tractable humour this evening than he had ever before seen her, and perhaps it was this that encouraged him to tell her of the scene he had witnessed in the octagon room, on the night of his first arrival at the Red Lodge.

She blushed deeply, and seemed at first inclined to be angry, but apparently overcame the inclination, and even laughed as he described his amazement when he first caught sight of her in the moonlight.

"I think moonlight makes me rather mad," she said, "I can never sleep when the moon is at the full, as it was that night, and so I often dress myself up in some old ball dresses that I found packed away in an attic, and amuse myself by dancing. I go to the octagon-room because nothing would induce my stepfather or Silas to visit it after dusk. They are both frightfully superstitious."

"And you are not?"

She smiled disdainfully.

"Of course I am not. Why should I be afraid of spirits? They cannot hurt me, even if they exist, which I more than doubt."

"I am going to ask you a rude question?" said Dalrymple: "Why do you wear these old-fashioned garments? They must be at least fifty years old."

"Nearer a hundred, I should say," she replied, "but I wear them because I have no others. They belonged to some great grandmother, and unfortunately the moth hasn't got in them, so my stepfather says it would be useless to buy others while these are still good. And as for the fashion, what does it matter? I never go out, and I never see anyone, nor am I likely to do so."

She waited a minute, and then with a new timidity in her voice, she said,—

"Don't you like my dress, then?"

"I am not sure that I do. Such sombre colours are more suited for old people. You ought to wear something bright, and full of colour. Then that cap conceals all your hair—you might as well be bald."

With a swift movement of petulance, she threw the cap on the floor, and removing a comb, let her hair fall down over her shoulders, shaking it out so that it might reach its full length, which was considerably below her waist.

The difference it made in her appearance was little short of wonderful. Bright, soft, and glossy, it fell into the loveliest curves imaginable, and wrapped her round in a veritable aiken veil.

Coming a step nearer Dalrymple, and looking up at him with something that in another girl would have been coquetry, she said,—

"Do you think I look better now?"

"Ever so much better."

"Then I won't wear the cap again."

"But what will the old man say?"

"What he likes. He will complain, I daresay and I shall defy him. It won't be the first battle we have had, nor the last," she replied, shrugging her shoulders. "But we won't talk about him. I want to hear something of the great London world in which you live—of the beautiful women, and the clever men you meet. Oh, I have so longed to go there—I sometimes feel inclined to run away from the Red Lodge, and seek my fortune as Dick Whittington did. I would too if I were a boy."

To hear her speak like this was a fresh revelation to Herbert. She was, indeed, a girl full of surprises, and as he got to know her better he was the more impressed with this fact.

Neither was she as ignorant as he imagined her to be, in spite of the fact that since her mother's death she had received no sort of education; but there were a few shelves of old books at the Red Lodge, and these she had read and re-read until she knew their contents by heart.

It was nearly ten o'clock when she said "good-night" to him, and walked slowly in the shadow of the building towards the house. She had not gone very far, however, before she came back again, and laid out her hand.

"You have been kind," she said, "and I am grateful to you. Gratitude is a new sensation to me—I have not felt it ever since my mother died. If I have been rude and ungracious to you, I am sorry."

Dalrymple was quite aware how much it must have cost her wild spirit to say this, and he was profoundly touched.

"You have no need to be sorry, Elfrida. I have constituted myself your friend, and your friend I mean to be. There seems no way of serving you just at present, seeing that I have no right to dispute your stepfather's authority over you, but I am not going to desert you for all that."

"Then you'll be here again to-morrow evening!" she exclaimed, unconcealed gladness in her tone.

"Yes, if you wish it."

So the next evening, and the one after that, and for nearly a fortnight, he came regularly to the trying place, and although she could not always contrive to leave the house exactly at the time named, she nevertheless managed to get out in the course of the evening.

He had got into the habit of bringing her books—for the most part volumes of Tennyson's poems; and with these she was delighted. Moreover they seemed to exercise a very great influence over her, and she was never tired of hearing him read them to her. Her appearance too, underwent a change, she grew more careful in her dress, in the way she did her hair, and in the arrangement of some old frills of old lace she had hunted up, and which she wore round her neck. The change became so marked that even Silas Surtees noticed it.

He had come in one evening later than usual, and she was setting his supper for him in the great oak raftered kitchen. As she moved about he sat in one of the polished wooden chairs watching her, and the last rays of the setting sun, slanting in through the open window made a sort of aureole round her figure as she flitted about.

She still wore the short-waisted brown dress, but its brownness was relieved by the mass of soft yellow lace round the throat, and further by a cluster of deep red roses she had fastened amongst it. Her hair was piled high on her head in shining coils, which strayed into pretty forelocks near the temples, and at the nape of the neck, and in her cheeks glowed a crimson as rich and deep as that of the roses themselves. Her face, too, had lost its old expression of sullen gloom, and the eyes were now bright and sparkling under the level darkness of their brows.

Silas was conscious of a feeling of surprise that deepened into admiration. He had acquired somewhat of a reputation as a Lothario amongst the village lasses, but it struck him that there was not one of the girls whom he had honoured by his boonish attentions, half so pretty as the child who cooked his food, and washed the plates for him. How was it he had never noticed it before?

"There!" said Elfrida, putting before him a dish of beans she had just taken from the oven, "It is all ready now."

She leaned a little forward to straighten the cloth, when he suddenly caught her round the waist, drew her to him, and kissed her on the lips.

For a moment, surprise and indignation held the girl speechless. Her colour faded, to return however in a deeper flood of shamed carnation, as she tore herself from him, her eyes flashing, her breast heaving, her lips trembling. He made an effort to retain her, but, managing to free her hands, she dealt him a stinging blow on the cheek that involuntarily made him recoil.

"You little vixen!"

"How dared you—how dared you!" she panted, the words coming through her clenched teeth. "If you insult me again, I will kill you—do you hear, I will kill you!"

And then, without waiting to hear his reply, she rushed from the kitchen just as old Surtees who had witnessed the scene from behind the door, entered from the opposite side.

"Proved herself a match for you that time—eh, Silas?" chuckled the old man with a cheerful

grin. "Gave you rather more than you bargained for, eh? But what's the meaning of this sudden affection on your part, you used to take no notice of the girl!"

"Curse her!" muttered Silas, going to a scrap of looking glass hung up on the wall to inspect the scarlet mark her fingers had made on his cheek. "I'll be even with her yet."

"Not in that way, my dear boy, not in that way! But there's no reason in the world why you should not marry her, and so keep her money in the family. To that arrangement I will willingly give my consent."

"She looked like marrying me, didn't she?" demanded Silas, with savage satire; "said she'd kill me if I touched her again."

"Pooh, pooh! That's all nonsense! Girls always begin by saying that sort of thing, but that's no reason why you should take any notice of them. Look here, Silas, I've been on the point of talking to you about this matter for a long time, only you seemed so set against the girl that I was afraid you might object. Her money is mine till she reaches the age of nineteen years, but then I lose all control over it, and over her as well, for you may be sure that uncle of hers, in Australia, will find his way over here, and take possession of her and the fortune. Now, if you were to marry her in the interval, he would be nonplussed, for he could not set aside the marriage, neither could he obtain the money."

"But suppose she refuses!" said Silas, hesitatingly, and with a furtive glance at his father.

"Then she must be subjected to gentle coercion," returned the old man, rubbing his thin hands together. "We must, if necessary, lock her in her bedroom, and feed her on bread and water, and that, I guess, will soon bring her to her senses."

Meanwhile Elfrida, hardly knowing what she was doing in her passion of indignation, had made straight for the granary. It was very improbable Dalrymple would be there yet, but, at any rate, she would be out of the reach of Silas, and free to indulge her anger unrestrained. But, to her surprise, he was there, and came forward to meet her with hands outstretched.

"Why, Elfrida, what is the matter?" he cried in astonishment, as he saw her face. "There, there, calm yourself, and tell me what has happened."

But she was far too agitated to obey him all at once, and with the gentle tenderness of a brother, he let her sob out her grief on his shoulder, while he smoothed back the clustering ripples of hair from her brow.

After awhile she regained command over herself, and then told him what had occurred. His indignation equalled her own—nay, was even greater, for he knew better than she did, how terrible Silas could make her life by his persecutions.

"But surely your stepfather—bad as he is—would save you from such insults!" he exclaimed presently. "My own opinion is that you had better appeal to his protection."

"It would be useless. He would not listen to a word I said, if Silas contradicted it," she returned, with quiet conviction. "No, I shall have to protect myself."

"But how?"

She showed the gleaming barrel of her tiny revolver, and smiled.

"With this, if necessary. Silas is a terrible coward, and when he sees I am determined, he will let me alone."

But in this view Herbert hardly shared. He knew how easy it would be for a strong man, like Silas, to wrest the weapon from her slender fingers, and then she would be utterly at his mercy.

A fierce pang of jealousy went through him, and then he stopped short in his angry paces to and fro, and stood in front of her with a new light in his eyes—the light of comprehension.

Until this moment no idea of his true feelings for the girl had even so much as suggested itself to him, but now the veil was torn from his eyes and he knew.

"Elfrida," he said, very gently. "There is one

way out of the difficulty, but I am not sure you will agree to it."

"If you think it right, I shall think so too," she interrupted, quickly.

"Perhaps not in this special instance, but anyhow you will tell me exactly how you feel with regard to it. After what has occurred to-night the Red Lodge is no longer a proper home for you. Will you let me take you away from it—will you trust yourself to me, and become my wife?"

She looked at him half incredulously, and recoiled a step.

"Your wife!" she repeated, in a half whisper. "Your wife! Do you really mean this? Are you in earnest?"

"I was never more in earnest in my life. I will take you to London, and we will be married from the house of an old friend of mine who, I am sure, will be kind to you while you are with her, and afterwards—well, if you can trust me sufficiently to accept me for a husband, I promise you your trust shall never be betrayed."

She still stood and looked at him as if hardly yet convinced that she heard aright. Then, steadily enough, although a deep red stained her cheek, she said,—

"But aren't you saying this out of compassion? If so, my answer is—no, a thousand times no! I would rather fight my battle to the bitter end and alone than burden you, because you pity me. Besides, I am not a fitting wife for you! You ought to marry a woman of your own order—a beautiful patrician lady, instead of a lonely little waif like me, who never knew what kindness was until you showed it her."

"You are wrong, Elfrida. It is not pity that I feel for you, but love!"

She caught her breath sharply, then came nearer to him, and looked into his eyes as if she would read his very soul. His gaze met hers steadily, and she was satisfied.

Over her face flamed a gladness which made it absolutely radiant, and which betrayed her own secret.

With a maidenly impulse of shyness she put both her hands to hide it, but Herbert drew them gently away.

"Well, Elfrida, will you come with me for the sake of love?"

"I will come with you to the end of the world if you wish it!" was her fervent reply; and in another moment she was locked in his arms.

## CHAPTER V.

ELFRIDA, as she ran across the paved yard from the granary, was in a state of such utter ecstasy that she had eyes and ears for nothing but her own happiness. Even yet it hardly seemed real—that Herbert, who had grown to be her ideal hero, who was the bravest, handsomest, best man in all the world, should have chosen her for his bride, seemed little short of marvellous. She wanted to be alone, and think over it all in order to realise it.

Thus it happened that she did not see a limping, bent old man in a grey coat, who was standing in the shadow of a barn, and who, after he had watched her cross the pavement, remained quite still, with his eyes fixed on the granary, from which there presently issued the tall figure of a man, with a black beard and moustache, who walked hastily towards the plantation.

"So there is someone else," muttered old Surtees to himself, "we must take extra precautions, they will only just be in time."

He locked the door himself that night, and put the keys in his pocket.

The next morning Elfrida was conscious she was being watched by father and son, but the knowledge had very little effect on her, for she was in a happy dream, from which it would take more than suspicious glances to wake her.

Her step was light, her cheeks were bright with colour, her eyes sparkled with happiness—she was, in effect, the embodiment of radiant youth, and utterly unlike the sullen girl who had opened the door to Captain Dalrymple on the eventful evening of his first visit.

After she had cleared the breakfast things away, and was on the point of leaving the room to wash them up, she was harshly recalled by her teptather.

"Who was the man who was with you yesterday evening?" he demanded, keeping his suspicious eyes fixed on her face.

For a moment she hesitated, her colour fading; then she said very positively,—

"I shall not tell you."

"But I insist on knowing! I will starve you into telling me," he exclaimed, ferociously.

Elfrida only smiled.

"You may starve me as much as you like, but you ought to know by this time that when I say a thing I mean it."

He did know it. Over and over again he had tried to bend her stubborn will, and over and over again he had been defeated in the attempt. He waited a minute, his bushy brows meeting above his cunning old eyes, while Silas looked from one to the other, half uncertainly.

"Very well, then; as you won't tell me, I must find out for myself," he observed at last, "but, in the meantime I forbid you to quit the house. And I may as well take the opportunity of informing you that you will consider yourself engaged to my son, Silas, and in the course of another month you will marry him. Do you understand?"

Elfrida met his gaze unflinchingly.

"I shall neither marry him in the course of another month, nor another year—nor another fifty years," she answered, boldly. "You need not trouble to make arrangements of that kind, for I tell you honestly and truthfully I would rather be starved to death—I would rather kill myself, than marry him."

There was no doubting the sincerity of her words, and so far as Silas was concerned, he fully believed her capable of carrying out her threat. Not so his father, who was so obstinate and dogged in his way as she was in hers, and he had fully made up his mind that the projected marriage should take place. He waited for a few minutes until his passion had time to cool, then he got up, and seized the girl by the shoulder.

"Go to your room, and stay there until you can listen to reason!" he exclaimed in a hoarse whisper. "No!" he added, as a sudden idea struck him. "You shall go to the octagon-room, which is higher up, and where the ghosts will keep you company. They will bring you to your senses better than I can perhaps."

And, driving her before him, he went chuckling upstairs to the apartment which was supposed to be haunted, and which, as we know, Elfrida had chosen for her moonlight revels. Superstitious himself, he imagined she must share his fears, and with a refinement of cruelty—which, this time, missed its mark!—he condemned her to a solitude that he imagined would be rendered terrible by a supernatural dread.

Elfrida made no resistance—indeed, to attempt it would, as she knew, be utterly useless. Her one thought was—how she could communicate to Herbert what had happened, and all her wits were busily endeavouring to compass this end.

After locking her in, the old man returned to the sitting-room, where Silas was still lingering, biting his nails, and frowning to himself as if puzzled.

"Look here," he said, awkwardly, "I would let the girl out if I were you. I don't want to marry her—in fact, I would much rather have nothing to do with her."

His father turned upon him like a snarling wolf, and struck his stick violently on the floor.

"But I say you shall marry her, whether you want it or not. I have made up my mind, and I'll carry it through. I suppose you are still hankering after that brazen-faced hussey, the blacksmith's daughter, down in the village, eh? But, if you have her, you don't get one farthing of my money—not one farthing. D'ye hear?"

If Silas heard, he gave no sign of doing so, beyond looking at the carpet with frowning eyes.

"I told you that three months ago, when I

first heard a whisper of your carrying on with her," went on the old man, "and shall I tell you what I did as well? I went to W—and I made my will, and if you married her, you were not to inherit one penny. So you see, I have kept my word."

Silas lifted his eyes for a moment and looked at him—a look so full of vindictive hatred, that if the old man had met it, he must surely have quailed before it. But he was smiling to himself at the idea of his own cleverness in outwitting his son, and for the moment was oblivious of everything else. Presently he roused himself, and went on briskly.

"So you'll marry Elfrida, and I shall kill two birds with one stone, secure her money, and wipe off all old scores with her."

"And a nice chance of happiness I shall have!" put in Silas. "A wife who hates me, and who'll do all she can to thwart me."

"But you can manage her when she's your wife, Silas, you'll have the authority of a husband over her, and you'll soon break her in, my boy. Why, in six months, if you only act properly, she'll be ready to cringe on the floor at your feet."

"Much more likely to run away from me on the wedding day."

"And what if she does? She can't take her fortune with her. It'll be yours, my lad, your own, and you'll be able to do what you like with it. Besides, I have made up my mind you are to marry her, so there's an end of it."

Silas went off to his work without any further remark, while his father occupied himself as usual with his accounts.

In the evening, as Herbert was making his way to the trying-place, his attention was attracted by a red handkerchief flying from the end of a long stick. He paused, and made out that it proceeded from the window of the octagon-room. It immediately struck him that it must be a danger-signal, placed there by Elfrida herself, as a warning that he should not go to the Granary.

Accordingly, he remained hidden in the shrubbery, but in such a position as to command a view of the house, from which he presently saw Surtees and his son cautiously letting themselves out.

They crossed the garden and seemed to be making their way to the granary, from which Herbert at once concluded that they had seen him there the previous evening, and had now gone forth with the intention of discovering his identity.

The octagon room faced the other way, and, deeming it probable that the two Surtees would remain watching for half an hour or so, Herbert determined to take advantage of their absence to see if Elfrida would not show herself.

He therefore crept round to the front and looked up at the windows.

He was not disappointed. She almost immediately appeared, and as she saw him, put her finger on her lips in token of silence, and waved him away, unaware that her captors were, at the present moment, out of the house.

Instead of obeying her, he scribbled a few words on a slip of paper, and wrapping it round his heavy gold pencil-case, he went a little way off and threw it at the open casement, with such accuracy of aim that it fell at her feet.

In a few minutes she had written her reply and thrown it down.

In it she explained briefly what had happened, and implored him not to let her stepfather or his son catch a glimpse of him. Fearless on her own behalf, she had grown timid at the idea of danger to her lover.

Once more Herbert scribbled a message, in which he promised to leave the place now, but to return in three or four hours' time, when the Surtees would both be in bed, and there would be little risk of his being seen.

Then he cautiously withdrew, thinking over plans for her escape as he went, and fuming with rage against the unscrupulous old villain who was doing his best to wreck the young girl's happiness.

"I must marry her at once," he said to himself, "and the only way is to take her straight up to London and get a special license. At present, neither I nor anyone else can question Surtees'

authority over her, as he is her legally appointed guardian."

Still revolving various plans in his mind, he walked about in the woods until the church clock in the village struck one, then he returned and carefully reconnoitred.

The building seemed very quiet, and appeared to be in complete darkness, save where a few straggling moonbeams fell upon it.

The window of the octagon room was open, and Elfrida stood in front of it.

If by any means he could get near enough to talk to her, it would be so much the better, as he could communicate to her the plan of action he had decided upon.

But the octagon room was high, and the westaria that covered the lower part of the house did not reach up to it. Still perhaps if he climbed to its furthest limits he would be able to make her hear, only first of all it was necessary to be sure there was no one about.

He went carefully round the building, and had almost satisfied himself of there being no danger, when his eyes were caught by a gleam of light proceeding from a crack in the shutter of the room used by the master of the house as his "study."

Herbert was a good gymnast, and in another few moments had swung himself up by means of the ivy, and was peeping through the crevice which, small as it was, nevertheless permitted him a very fair view of the interior of the room.

The picture that greeted him was a sufficiently astonishing one.

On the table in the middle stood a couple of candles, whose light fell on a glittering yellow mass, that almost covered the table, while standing over it, his long vulture-like fingers caressing the glittering golden coins, and the miser's lust of money in his eyes stood old Surtees, literally revelling in the sight of his hoards.

Herbert watched him for fully five minutes, during which the old man handled the sovereigns with a gleaming delight that made the onlooker shiver, then, unable to keep his precarious footing any longer, the young officer climbed down, and returned to the terrace below the octagon-room.

As Surtees was still up, and might at any moment make his appearance, it did not seem wise to remain, so once more he made use of his pencil-case, and wrote a few lines of instruction to Elfrida.

He told her he would go up to London to-morrow, procure a special license, and make arrangements with the friend he had mentioned, for taking the young girl to her.

Then he would return, and come to the Red Lodge about this time to-morrow night, bringing with him a stout cord, by means of which Elfrida could leave prison, and drive with him to the station at W—, where they would be in time to catch the mail up to town.

He waited for his answer, which consisted of the one word "Yes," and then he went away.

## CHAPTER VI.

It was between one and two o'clock as Herbert came along the avenue the next evening, carrying with him the bag in which was coiled the rope by whose means Elfrida was to make her escape.

Fortunately the moon was at the full, and her bright radiance unobscured by the faintest shadow of cloud, so that each point of the old house was clearly revealed, the gable ends standing out with sharp-cut distinctness against the sky.

Everything was very still, there was no wind, and not a leaf moved.

Herbert stood on the terrace looking up at the window of the octagon-room, but to his surprise and disappointment, no Elfrida was visible.

After waiting a little while with what patience he could muster, he threw a small handful of gravel against the glass.

The sound it made was distinctly audible to him, as he stood below, therefore it followed that the inmate of the room could hardly fail to hear it; nevertheless, it elicited no response, and the young man's heart became filled with apprehen-

sion as he wondered what could possibly have happened to the girl.

Had old Surtees removed her to another room? Still, even in that case, her quick wits would have found some method of communicating with her lover.

He walked backwards and forwards in a perfect agony of impatience, uncertain what to do or think, and perhaps never, until this moment had he quite realised the hold his little sweetheart had on his heart.

To lose her, would be worse than death itself.

While he was still debating, he heard a door shut, and immediately afterwards a small black-robed figure glided towards him in the moonlight.

"At last, darling," he said, hurrying to meet her, with outstretched hands, "I was beginning to despair of seeing you. I fancied something dreadful must have happened."

She started, and it seemed to him a shudder shook her frame, but of this he could not be sure. The shawl she had wrapped round her head concealed her features.

"Come along!" she whispered hurriedly. "Let us lose no time in getting away from this house."

She thrust her arm through his, and almost dragged him forward, while she pulled the drapery closer round her face.

"But how was it you were not in the octagon-room?" he asked, half bewildered by her manner.

"I will tell you some time—not now. For Heaven's sake don't ask me any questions now!" His astonishment increased; but he obeyed her wishes, telling himself that the excitement under which she had been labouring for the last day or two, had partially unbinged her brain.

But although he did not speak, his eyes, as they looked down into hers, betrayed his anxiety. She saw the glance, and a half sob escaped her lips. At the sound he stopped.

"Elfrida, are you regretting what you are doing? If so, there is still time to turn back."

"No, no, no!" she exclaimed, vehemently. "I would not turn back for all the wealth of the world. Cannot you see that my one great anxiety is to leave the Red Lodge miles behind! Come along, we have not a moment to spare."

Outside the Lodge gates, he had left a dog-cart, and they did not pause until they were in it, seated side by side, and Herbert held the reins in his hands.

"Drive fast—faster!" she cried feverishly. "The horse wants whipping, he is going at a snail's pace."

"On the contrary, he is stepping out pretty well. Besides, you forget darling, that the mail does not go till half-past three o'clock. Therefore, we shall have some time to wait at the station."

"Shall we? Oh, that will be terrible, terrible! Cannot you drive us to some other station, and catch up the mail earlier?"

"Even if I did so, we should not reach our destination any the sooner. Why, what is the matter with you, Elfrida? You are trembling all over."

She made a desperate effort at self-control, which was only partially successful.

"I am a little distraught, I think," she said, with a tremulous attempt at playfulness. "Did I not tell you that when the moon was at the full, I became rather mad? You see, I only spoke the truth. But I won't say any more foolish things to you—at least, not unless I can help it."

She kept her word, and during the rest of the journey was very silent; but Herbert could not divest himself of a suspicion that she was concealing something from him. What its nature was he could not guess, but he was conscious of a feeling of apprehension that increased with every minute that passed.

In a little while, W—— station was reached, and they both got down, while the dog-cart was given in charge of a sleepy ostler, who had come from the hotel to take it back. The mail was not yet due, and the lovers spent the interval of waiting in walking up and down the dim and deserted platform. Elfrida still continued silent, but every now and then she would look round apprehensively,

as if afraid of seeing something terrible.

At last the train came in, puffing and snorting and sending forth clouds of fiery steam. Almost before it stopped Elfrida had jumped into an empty compartment, and ensconced herself in a corner, and as the engine started away, she gave a sigh of relief.

"Thank Heaven, we are on our way!" she exclaimed fervently, and then relapsed into complete silence. She was so still, that her lover, who was watching her, fancied she had gone to sleep—or would have fancied so, but for an instinct that told him sleep would hardly visit her in her present excited condition. For himself, he could not overcome the strange fears as of coming evil, that had fastened upon him. Why did she not speak, why could she not tell him how it was she had not shown herself at the window when she knew he was waiting outside to see her?

He kept on hoping she would offer some explanation, but she made no attempt to do so, and delicacy kept him from questioning her. After her faith in him, it would be too terrible to let her think he distrusted her.

And so the journey was completed without a word being spoken on either side. When Paddington was reached it was between eight and nine o'clock, and already the great terminus began to show signs of the busy life that would animate it a little later on.

"I am going to take you to the hotel where you can rest for a couple of hours, while I go to my club to make some final arrangements," he said to her. "Unfortunately, the friend to whose charge I intended confiding you is ill, and so I cannot take you to her."

"It does not matter," she returned, hurriedly, "the hotel will do just as well—better in fact, for I shall be able to be alone for a little while, and that is what I want."

He took her to the hotel, put her in charge of the chambermaid, and promised to return at about eleven o'clock.

"And then we shall go straight to the Registrar's office," he said, "and you will leave it as my wife."

He bent down to kiss her brow, but recoiled involuntarily at the contact of the white flesh, which was cold as marble.

She made no remark, and he went away, carrying with him the remembrance of that deathly touch which pursued him like an evil presence, and took from him all the joy with which he had been looking forward to the moment when Elfrida would be really his own.

At the appointed time he came back for her, and found her awaiting him in the hall, wearing a long black cloak, and a black bonnet and veil which she had in the interval sent the chambermaid out to buy for her.

"What a sombre little figure you look!" he exclaimed, with a half smile, "there is nothing bridal in your appearance. Why didn't you put on something bright in honour of such a special occasion as this?"

"I forgot you liked bright colours," she returned absently, and with the same haste as she had manifested before, she took his arm, and passed with him out into the crowded street, where she walked straight on, looking neither to the right nor left, but keeping her eyes fixed on the ground.

They reached the Registrar's office, and the ceremony was proceeded with, Elfrida giving her answers in a firm and distinct voice that contrasted favourably with her former demeanour; but which, nevertheless, had a curiously strained ring in them to the young man's ears. Indeed, his own replies bore witness to a good deal of agitation, and it almost seemed as if bride and bridegroom had changed places for the time being.

When the short ceremony was over he threw back the veil that had, up to now, concealed her features.

"I want to see what my wife is like," he said, tenderly; but he was hardly prepared for the ghastly pallor of the features that met his gaze. "Elfrida, you are ill!" he cried in alarm; but she shook her head faintly, and was on the point of contradicting him when there came the sound

of a commotion of some sort in the passage outside, followed by the entrance of two men, one being a policeman.

Miss Elfrida Manners, late of the Red Lodge, S——shire!" said the latter, coming up to the young bride, and looking into her face.

"This lady is my wife!" returned Herbert, haughtily, while, with an air that seemed to challenge the whole world to take her from him, he drew her arm through his. "What is your business with her?"

"An unfortunate one, sir, I am sorry to say," answered the man, respectfully. "It is my painful duty to arrest this young lady on a charge of murdering her guardian, Mr. Edwin Surtees, of the Red Lodge."

## CHAPTER VII.

THAT same afternoon Herbert sat in his chambers waiting for the cab that was to take him to Paddington in time for the evening train—for he had resolved to go down to the Red Lodge without delay, and see if he could not elucidate the mystery that surrounded its master's death.

The cab would not be here for half-an-hour yet, and meanwhile the young man was a prey to miserable thought.

He recalled the events of this morning—the warrant shown by the police-officer, and the obstinate silence preserved by Elfrida. In answer to the charge she had simply said, "I am not guilty;" but not even to her husband would she utter a word more, and although he had gone with her to the Police-court, and implored her to confide in him, she had shaken her head, and absolutely refused to do so. Then, of course, he had to leave her, and now he was recalling her strange demeanour of the night before, her evident agitation, and the haste she had made to leave the Red Lodge.

Regarding the old man's death, all the particulars that were known were that one of the farm labourers had gone to the house early in the morning to speak to Mr. Surtees, and had found the back door open, but could not make any one hear.

He had then proceeded to the kitchen, where there were no signs of occupation, and had afterwards gone to "the master's study" which he found in an unusual state of confusion.

On the floor lay the figure of the master himself—dead; and on the arrival of a medical man death was found to be due to a bullet that had pierced the lungs.

A search was instituted, and, hidden in the ragged cushions of an armchair, was found the weapon with which the crime had been committed—a revolver, on which was scratched the name, "Elfrida Manners."

This, coupled with the fact of Elfrida's disappearance had thrown suspicion upon her, especially as it was known that she and her guardian had been on bad terms with each other.

Edwin Surtees was away from the Red Lodge. Early the day before, he had gone up to London on some business for his father, and had not returned when the murder was committed, so that there was no question of his being concerned in it.

"She is innocent; I know she is innocent!" exclaimed Herbert, aloud, starting up from his chair and beginning to pace the room. Yes, he was sure she was innocent, and yet he was equally sure that she had known of the old man's death when she left the Lodge; nay, more, that she probably knew, too, who had fired the fatal shot.

Circumstances were against her. She was alone in the house with the old man; she was known to have had the pistol in her possession, and her elopement lent colour to the idea of her guilt. Moreover, her obstinate silence was also against her, and there seemed every likelihood that at the magisterial inquiry she would be committed to take her trial on the charge of wilful murder.

Herbert had offered bail to any amount, but of course it had been refused. He had then hurried to a well-known criminal lawyer to instruct him to defend his wife, but unfortunately he was

from home, and would not return until the next evening, and that was the reason he was now going to S—shire to spend the interval in gaining what information he could concerning the crime.

He found the Red Lodge in possession of the police. Silas had returned, but was staying at the village inn, as he declared nothing should induce him to enter "that accursed house," as he called it, while his father's body remained under its roof.

He seemed a good deal "cut up" by the old man's death, and tried to drown his grief by liberal applications of brandy, which was quite a new departure for him, as he had formerly been an extremely sober man.

When Herbert returned to town, he at once proceeded to keep his appointment with the lawyer—a clean shaven, keen-eyed man, named Stevens, who listened with silent attention as he gave him a history of his visit and the information he had gained. The information was by no means inconsiderable.

In the first place the Red Lodge had been searched, and not a farthing of money had been found beyond a few shillings in the dead man's pocket; then a solicitor at W—had produced the "last will and testament of Edwin Surtees," in which he had left all his money to his son, on condition that he did not marry Susan Butt, the blacksmith's daughter. Strangely enough this Susan Butt had left the village the very day before the murder, and her family professed complete ignorance of her whereabouts, though it was freely whispered that she had actually married Silas some time ago, and he was purposely keeping her out of the way.

As Herbert finished speaking, Mr. Stevens said,—

"The case, as I understand it, stands thus: your wife, who is accused of the murder, refuses to say a word except that she is innocent, and you believe in her innocence, although you think she knows who the actual murderer is. It follows, then, that she must have some motive for keeping silence; and you think it likely she does so from an idea of honour, which will not let her betray the culprit! So far, so good. Now, you are able to state, of your own personal knowledge, that the night before he died old Surtees had a considerable sum of money in the house, and that money has disappeared; ergo, it must have been taken by the guilty person, who has probably hidden it in some safe place. Mr. Surtees has left a will by which he disinherits his son if his son marries one Susan Butt, and by a strange coincidence, this Susan Butt disappears the very day before the old man's death. You hear rumours that she was married to Silas Surtees. That can be easily proved by a search at Doctors Commons. We will go round at once and ascertain if a marriage took place."

They did so, with the result of finding that Silas had actually married the blacksmith's daughter three months ago.

"The next point," said the solicitor, "is to find this Susan Butt—or Susan Surtees, to give her her proper title, and after that I think we shall see our way a little clearer."

"She is pretty sure to be in London—people always come to London when they want to hide themselves. Come and see me again to-morrow, and perhaps by that time, I shall be able to give you the lady's address."

But it was not until two days afterwards that his agents were successful in finding it.

Mrs. Silas Surtees was living, under the name of Smith, in a small street in the East end, where she had taken lodgings for a week.

"And her landlady thinks she intends sailing in the *Orient Queen* to South America," added Stevens, "I have told my man to take a room in the same house so as to keep his eye on her, and if I mistake not we shall hear of her husband joining her before the end of the week."

"The landlady is an inquisitive woman, and discovered the answer to a letter written to a Steam Navigation Company, regarding a passage to Buenos Ayres, and the contents of this letter she communicated to my man, during their gossip."

"I have told him to wire me directly the

husband of 'Mrs. Smith' turns up, and when he does so, you and I will go and see him," and hear what he has to say. It is my belief that in him we shall find the real culprit."

"But he was away the night old Surtees died!"

"So he says, and it is proved that he took a ticket for London the day before, but it is more than probable that he got out before the end of the journey, and returned, taking care not to show himself where he was likely to be recognised. Then by some means, he prevailed upon your wife not to betray him, and it is for his sake she is keeping silence. That is my theory, time will prove whether it is right."

That same night the wire came from the detective saying that Silas Surtees had arrived at his wife's lodgings, and Herbert, accompanied by the solicitor, at once went down to identify him.

To their surprise, they found him ill in bed, attended by a doctor, whom his wife had called in, and who announced his case to be well-nigh hopeless.

While on his way from the station to the lodgings he had been knocked down by a passing vehicle, and the wheel had passed over his body.

"He wasn't sober, else it wouldn't have happened," sobbed his wife—a pretty, dark-eyed girl, who had been the belle of the village when she first attracted Silas Surtees's admiration.

He lingered on for some days, but from the first there was little or no chance of his recovery, and when he became convinced of this, he voluntarily made a confession which cleared up the mystery of the murder.

It seemed that on the very night Herbert had watched old Surtees counting over his hoards of gold, Silas also had been a witness of the scene, through the keyhole of the study, and had then determined to avail himself of his knowledge by appropriating the money as soon as he found a chance of doing so with safety.

He was in a great dilemma with regard to Elfrida, whom his father wished him to marry, and dared not announce that he was already married for fear of the old man's anger, and consequent disinheritance.

(Continued on page 357.)

## UNDER A CLOUD.

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### CHAPTER XIII.

It seemed to Percy Fellowes that he was suddenly plunged into a sea of troubles. Any one of the three great anxieties which haunted him would have been hard to bear, but, combined, their weight was almost overwhelming, and he hardly knew what step to take next.

Dr. Harley, who had watched the effect of his news upon the young man, was deeply touched; he laid one hand sympathetically on Percy's shoulders, and said kindly,—

"You must bear up, my poor fellow. Your parents have only you to look to, for their sakes pull yourself together."

"I can't; I feel stunned, it is all too horrible. Of course, if Lang is in England, Barbara is acting under his influence. I need not go on; what use is it to make inquiries about tramps. Of course, it was that scoundrel she met, and she handed over to him the proceeds of her forgery."

The elder man was far more pitiful to the erring girl than Barbara's outraged brother, but then Dr. Harley thought of her transgressions only as the result of a terrible disease, while Percy could not and would not realize this.

"Don't call it by that name," said the doctor gravely. "I assure you, if things are as I believe, your sister is as innocent of that sin as you are."

Percy shrugged his shoulders.

"Then she has managed to do as much harm as the most hardened criminal," he retorted. "My father is nearly ruined by the sums stolen from him, besides being broken in health by the

terrible fears for his own reason brought about by his mysterious losses. My mother may yet, if these robberies go on, have to leave her home and spend her last years in some cheap cottage; while I, well it doesn't matter about me, but Barbara has wrecked my life. How can I marry when I have no money to support a wife! How can I ask any woman to take my name when the stigma of crime, or the blight of insanity rests upon my sister."

"You are a harsh judge, Percy," said the doctor kindly, "but you will admit one thing, I have never deceived you. I would not say what I did not believe just to bury you up with false hopes."

"No," admitted Percy slowly, "I daresay I speak like a bear, but I trust you perfectly, Dr. Harley, only it seems to me you feel more pity for Barbara than she deserves."

"Then, if you trust me, Percy, believe my assurance, your sister is neither criminal nor insane. Barbara possesses a most sensitive organization, a highly strung nervous system, and both have been diverted by a villain to his own vile uses. This illness is the most merciful thing that could have happened, since it will prevent all communication between her and Lang. I shall send for a trained nurse, and between her, your mother and the maid it will be easy to arrange that Barbara is never left alone a moment, by night or day. As soon as she can travel, she must be taken away at once."

"And Lang—?"

"The supplies cut off, Lang will be in considerable difficulties. He is a cunning customer but men will risk a great deal for gold. I shouldn't wonder if he ventured here, in disguise, of course, to make inquiries as to his victim's health."

"Then you believe all the money stolen from us has gone to support him in South Africa?"

"I do. My theory is confirmed by a strange fact; during the time Lang was in prison, and money could not avail him, no spurious cheques were presented at your father's bank. As Vane Carlyon he made a considerable stir in the colony, and, of course, he must have spent a great deal of money. I remember in the accounts of his trial it was asserted that he must have received supplies from England, as for a considerable time he lived in the most expensive way, and it was only towards the end that he was bitten by the crime of the country, illicit diamond trading. They do say that, as Vane Carlyon, he was engaged to one of the richest heiresses in the colony. At the time of his arrest Miss Lester had a long and serious illness, and as soon as she could be moved her father sent her to England."

"Who told you this?" almost gasped Percy.

"A friend I met in London when I went up last week. He has a son settled at Port Agnes, and he was very full of the subject of the pretended Vane Carlyon."

"Dr. Harley?"

"Yes. Man alive, what's the matter. Come, you look worse now than when you heard of your sister's illness."

"Miss Durant comes from Port Agnes; her father's name was David Lester Durant."

"Aye, and I've sometimes thought he dropped the Durant in the colony, for no one from there seems to have heard that name while they are all loud in praise of David Lester, the richest merchant in Port Agnes."

"Don't you see. She, Olive, is the girl your friend says was engaged to Lang."

"I shouldn't wonder."

"But," Percy looked ghastly in his misery, "she must be saved from him; she must be warned."

"My dear fellow," said Dr. Harley, kindly. "Miss Olive needs no warning! When she lay dangerously ill at the Towers, in all her delirium her one cry was for her father to save her from that man. She never mentioned his surname, she always called on 'Dad' to send Vane away and set her free. I have known for weeks and months that Miss Durant had well nigh been another of Lang's victims. Haven't you noticed how she dreads meeting anyone from South Africa, how the very name of Port Agnes makes her shudder; depend upon it she was, as the

report declares, engaged to Lang, only she found him out in time. Olive Durant's intellect is keener than poor Barbara's; she possesses far more will power, and would be a most difficult subject to make a tool of by hypnotism or mesmerism."

"Then you don't think," asked poor Percy, betraying his own secret unconsciously, "that Olive cares for him now?"

"I believe her one feeling for him is a loathing dread. It is a strange thing that the two women who have suffered most through Lang should be living in the same village, but it makes our course easier; he has nothing to gain from anyone but these two, therefore you may depend upon it he is skulking somewhere near this place."

"But if you are right, and Miss Durant hates him, what can he gain from her?"

"She is, poor girl, well nigh alone in the world, for I don't count her stranger aunt and uncle as very close relations; she is, unhappily for herself, an heiress, and already in command of a very large fortune. Lang would not come to her with professions of love and promises of amendment; his claim on Olive Durant will be for hush money. He will tell her everyone in England will look coldly on her if they know she was engaged to a convict and demand a heavy bribe for his silence. He may (though I should hardly think he would dare go as far as that) threaten her with an action for breach of promise of marriage if she does not supply him freely with money."

"Heaven help her, poor persecuted girl!" cried Percy, "for it seems to me no one on earth can."

Dr. Harley looked at him kindly.

"I should have thought you might."

"I," and the poor fellow flushed hotly, "why, doctor, you know how things are with us, money gets scarcer everyday and we may all be ruined any time. How can I propose to one of the greatest heiresses in England? If only Olive were poor I would plead my cause with her to-morrow."

"If she were poor she would be in no danger," said Dr. Harley drily. "Mark my words, Percy, that girl's love is a treasure well worth winning, even if her first youthful fancy went out to a scoundrel! I am only a grave old surgeon but I can tell you my heart aches for that poor child, she seems to me so terribly alone in the world."

They had come to the cross roads and Percy alighted with a warm clasp of his friend's hand. Only when the doctor was out of sight did Mr. Fellowes remember the letter from Port Agnes which was still in his pocket. He understood it all now, every word confirmed Dr. Harley's theory, but, after all, there was no need to show him the letter from his colonial confrère, since his interest and sympathy were already all enlisted on Olive's behalf.

Percy Fellowes hardly knew what he did, he walked on, absently trying hard to think clearly and find some way out of the perplexities which surrounded him. He could not go home and admit to his father he had gone over to Dr. Harley's idea that Barbara alone was answerable for their recent trouble. He could not meet Sir George until he had decided whether or not to confide to him that Lang was in England, and so he strolled aimlessly on until a voice calling his name made him start, and, looking up, he saw the Vicar of High Cliff standing by his side.

"I was just on my way to the Towers," said Mr. Armitage, "to inquire for your sister; there is a rumour about the village that she is ill."

"She is dangerously ill," replied Mr. Fellowes; "it came on very suddenly; this morning she was in her usual health."

"I know," the Vicar looked really distressed, "for I met her and had some conversation with her. I am afraid I annoyed her, but I assure you I had no thought of doing so. Miss Fellowes is too much of a good angel to my sick poor for me to wish to offend her, even if I had not the highest reverence and esteem for her personally."

"I am sure you would not hurt anyone knowingly," Mr. Armitage. "I think you are the most for-easing man I know. Barbara may have seemed crotchety because this illness was coming on. What was it made you think she was annoyed?"

The Vicar flushed painfully; he was a young man, and almost painfully sensitive.

"Do you know Bob Blore, Mr. Fellowes?"

"Rather! He's the greatest reprobate in the place; my father would get rid of him with pleasure, only that secretary he had granted Blore a lease of the cottage for five years, and it seems while he pays his rent we can't turn him out. It's a marvel to me how he does pay it, for I don't believe he follows any occupation but poaching."

"He is the worst man in the parish, and but for your sister's liberality he would be compelled to leave High Cliff. I have ventured to remonstrate with Miss Fellowes once or twice before on the subject, but last night when I met her coming out of the cottage and heard him boast in the village of the money she had given him, I felt I must make one more effort. I was on my way to the Towers this morning when I met Miss Fellowes; I never thought of offending her, but I said giving sovereignty to a man like Blore was a direct encouragement to him, and that I did not think Lady Fellowes would approve of her daughter visiting such a reprobate, even if he expressed penitence."

"I will thank you in my mother's name, Mr. Armitage; she holds Blore in something like morbid terror, so great is her aversion to him. I am sure she would be horrified at the idea of Barbara visiting his cottage. I can only hope last night was an exceptional case."

"I have seen her myself leaving the house on three separate occasions; I know she allows Blore ten shillings a week, and increases his income by liberal presents. When I have spoken to her before she has always changed the subject, to-day she told me it was no business of mine, and she should certainly not be dictated to by a meddling old parson."

Robert Lang's thought speaking in Barbara's voice. Percy felt a pang as the truth of Dr. Harley's theory was thus confirmed.

"I can only tell you, Armitage," he said, speaking very cordially, because he could see how hurt and wounded the other man was, "that Barbara's family are grateful to you if she is not. I am afraid this illness has been coming on for some time, and it may account for the strangeness we have all noticed in her manner."

"She has looked very white and worn during the last few weeks," admitted the clergyman. "I am thankful, Mr. Fellowes, you don't think me meddling."

"I think you a kind friend," said Percy, simply, "and I am going to trust you with a family secret. It was before you came to High Cliff, but the tale is still so fresh in the memory of many, that surely you may have heard of Robert Lang and my father's strange infatuation for him?"

"Yes. I have heard that Sir George suffered terribly through his dishonesty, and that the same Lang was sentenced last January to seven years' penal servitude in Africa."

"Yes; but the cruellest wrong of all was that he contrived to win my sister's affection. Mr. Armitage, I can't explain it to you; I know that in her pure girlish self Barbara would shrink from Robert Blore in horror, but he was a protégé of Lang's, was no doubt in the secret of Lang's escape, my sister's gifts and visits to the old scoundrel are a reward for this."

"But," Mr. Armitage looked at Percy hesitatingly, "it is in the papers that Lang has escaped."

"He is most likely in England. I can trust you to keep our miserable secret, Mr. Armitage. At all costs, at all risks, we must guard Barbara from this man. I believe myself her infatuation for him is still so great, his influence over her so marvellous, that at his bidding she would leave her home and link her life to his guilty, soiled one. From your position you are a great deal more about in the village than we are; you are likely to hear reports that would not reach our ears; if you hear of a stranger arriving in High Cliff, or of any suspicious looking vagrant being seen about, I implore you to let me know."

"You may rely on me," said the Vicar gravely. "There's just one thing more, Mr. Fellowes,

could you describe Lang to me? I have never seen him."

"In his own character he is a handsome, fascinating young fellow, with brown hair, very clearly cut features, and dark, expressive blue eyes, but you may depend upon it that he will be most skilfully disguised; he is the sharpest beggar I ever met. I'd rather have to outwit three ordinary villains than Lang."

"There are two things he would find it hard to disguise," remarked the clergyman, "his eyes and his stature. Was he by any chance a very tall man?"

"No; he was just above the middle height. His eyes are peculiar; a girl once called them 'magnetic' in speaking of him to me, and it is not a bad description; he certainly uses them in a wonderful way."

"And you think he will come here?"

"I am afraid so; how did you hear of his escape?"

"It was mentioned to me by that missionary who was over here a few days ago."

"I don't remember any Missionary meeting."

"No; perhaps I should have said traveller, for he was a lay worker, not a clergyman. I allude to Mr. Morton, whom I met at the Lodge. I was very much taken with him, indeed I pressed him to sleep at the Vicarage; but he refused. He told me a great deal about South Africa; the subject has always been near my heart, for, as a younger man, it was the dream of my life to be a missionary there. In speaking of the voyage he mentioned that an hour before the ship left Table Bay the police officers came on board with a warrant to search for Robert Lang, alias Vane Carlyon. Of course they didn't find him. Mr. Morton declared he had most likely made his way up country to the gold fields, but a day or two later I read in the paper that the colonial authorities believe him to be in England."

They parted with many expressions of goodwill, and Percy returned to the Towers, hoping against hope, his father would not subject him to a cross-examination as to how he had passed his time.

He need not have feared. A change had taken place in Barbara, and Sir George's agony lest his daughter should be taken from him seemed to have swallowed up all other thoughts.

"I can't go up to her," he told Percy. "I think it would kill me. Your mother says she is quite conscious now, but that it is terrible to see her, she seems consumed by some terrible fear, some haunting dread."

"Can't mother get her to speak and say what it is?"

"No; it is as though all power of speech had left her. All her other faculties have returned. She starts at the least sound, and her eyes follow your mother whenever she moves, as though she dreaded being left alone, but she has not uttered one word. Oh, if only Harley would come back."

He came very soon, and Percy, with an aching heart, followed him upstairs to the sick room. There she lay, the beautiful girl who had brought such terrible sorrow on those nearest and dearest to her, and all Percy's harsh thoughts of her conduct fled as he looked at her still, set white face.

Barbara raised her eyes as he entered. A shudder seemed to convulse her frame as Dr. Harley took her hand to feel her pulse. Here, beautiful blue eyes, wandered round the room, with a dumb, piteous entreaty, which almost broke her mother's heart.

"Oh, my darling," she cried, imploringly, "try to tell me what you want. Tell your mother what is troubling you, Barbara?"

But there was no answer.

As he pressed his mother's hand fondly Percy wondered what spell kept Barbara silent. Was it that some terrible shock had indeed deprived her of the power of speech, or could it be that the poor weary brain still obeyed the persecutor's commands, and he, through some weird science, imposed silence upon her.

## CHAPTER XIV.

OF course the news of Barbara's illness travelled to High Cliff Lodge, and affected the three women there in widely different fashions.

Mrs. Jocelyn felt quite sure her brother was at the bottom of the matter, and felt indignant with him for risking discovery, and courting needless danger. The widow shrewdly suspected Bertie, as she called him, had engaged himself both to Barbara Fellowes and to Olive, but, being a woman with a keen eye for the main chance, she preferred him to keep the latter contract.

Olive Durant was both rich and generous. If she refused to marry Bertie she could make him, by a stroke of her pen, independent for life; and could provide handsomely for his sister.

Poor Barbara Fellowes possessed no such magic power; she had already helped her recreant lover to the uttermost of her means. She had a father and brother determined to avenge themselves on Lang if possible, at any length of time, so the widow considered it foolish of her beloved brother to venture near the Towers, and much preferred her own scheme for his visiting High Cliff Lodge.

Alice Melville was very sorry for Miss Fellowes' illness; but then she had been a mere child at the time of Barbara's former troubles, and she never for an instant supposed the old cause was at the bottom of her sudden danger.

As for Olive Durant, she seemed completely upset by the news. Ever since she had heard Barbara's story, her love for her had been mingled with a deep compassion. Olive would have given her own life freely for the woman who had found her in the snow, taken her home, and treated her as a sister. Her first words were that she would go to the Towers and beg to assist in the nursing.

"If you only saw yourself, dear, you would never think of such a thing," said Alice, fondly. "Why, Olive, you look like a little white ghost. You are as fit for sick nursing as I am to be prime minister."

"Miss Durant must not think of such a thing," said Mrs. Jocelyn, who felt that, with Olive domiciled at the Towers, all her own plans would go askew. "I am sure her aunt would be seriously displeased if I allowed it."

Alice felt indignant at this speech, but wisely held her tongue. She found her cousin, gentle and considerate as she seemed, was quite able to administer the snub so richly deserved.

"I think," said Olive, drawing her slight figure to its full height and speaking calmly, but with chilling courtesy, "you are under a mistake, Mrs. Jocelyn; there is no question of your 'allowing' or forbidding anything I do."

Mrs. Jocelyn's thin face flushed with anger. "Mrs. Wyndham engaged me," she began, but Olive interrupted her.

"My aunt could not give you a power she has not herself. I am of age, Mrs. Jocelyn, and my own mistress. You came here to act as house-keeper and chaperon to my cousin and myself, but I never dreamed of admitting your right to dictate my actions. If you consider yourself bound to do so, we had better part."

Mrs. Jocelyn began to whimper.

"Of course, in my dependent position I can be trampled on and insulted. I have done my utmost to promote your comfort, and now you turn round and talk of our parting."

"I have no wish to trample on anyone," said Olive, quietly, "but I must be mistress of my own actions, and if you think it your duty to remonstrate with me, I repeat we had better part."

"I won't say another word," said Mrs. Jocelyn; "if you will go to the Towers and kill yourself, why you must. My kind anxiety is only misunderstood."

Olive put her hand on her cousin's shoulder, and led the way to the pretty gardens; they sat down on two chairs placed beneath a spreading chestnut tree; for a little while neither of them spoke, at last Olive asked, gravely,—

"Alice, do you like Mrs. Jocelyn?"

Alice hesitated, and then, woman like, answered the question by another.

"Do you know, Mr. Fellowes asked me that very question the first time he saw her."

"Please don't fence with me, Ally, I want your real true opinion. Do you like her?"

"Well then, I don't. At first, when we saw her in London, I thought her charming; then when we came down here I was not so sure, and this morning her face positively frightened me; she looked as if she could kill you."

Olive hesitated.

"Will you think me very changeable? I was delighted with her at first, and now—I am afraid of her."

"Olive!"

"It is quite true, Alice," the girl's face grew whiter still as she spoke; "I am not like you, dear, you need fear no one, because your past is an open book with no sad secret in it. But I—I have to be careful whom I trust—and I don't trust Mrs. Jocelyn."

Alice looked very grave.

"Neither do I," she said at last. "Now, Olive, give me your reasons first, and then I will tell you mine."

"I don't think she is sincere, and I have found her once or twice listening at the door when you and I were talking alone together. Then, she contradicts herself. The story she told us about that gentleman who came to see her the other day, was quite different to the one she told the Vicar. And I have found out that she writes long letters every week to Mrs. Wyndham."

"I am sure she is not sincere," agreed Alice; "though I can't tell you when I first found it out. Percy Fellowes's question set me thinking; he said she never looked anyone in the face, and that was a sure sign of her being deceitful. Before that I had only noticed she seemed always asking you for things."

"Not asking," corrected Olive, "hinting."

"Well, it's the same thing; I suppose Percy's questions made me anxious, and I took to watching her. She seems always prowling about at night, after we are in bed. I find none of the servants can bear her; then it came into my head suddenly how very little we know of her. You know Aunt Grace never wrote to her reference; in fact she never gave any; she only said she was nearly related to Lady Tollington, and, as Uncle Tom has been the Earl's lawyer for years, Aunt Grace thought that enough."

Olive hardly followed out this line of argument, she said, heavily,—

"I don't want to say anything against her; she may be everything else desirable in a chaperon, but she is not quite straightforward—I can't trust her."

"I haven't finished," said Alice, simply; "I looked in the Peerage one day, and I found that Lady Tollington was a Miss Jocelyn."

"That proves that she really is connected with the Countess; she is most likely her sister-in-law!"

"Yes," Alice was flushing painfully; "but I mentioned the Tollingtons one day to Mr. Armitage, and he knows them quite well. He says they are the most charming pair he ever met, and that Lady Tollington is not a bit ashamed of having earned her living before her marriage. Now, Olive, that does not agree with Mrs. Jocelyn telling us they would be annoyed at her taking a situation!"

"No."

"Mrs. Jocelyn never mentions her husband. . . . Mr. Armitage told me the one sorrow of Lady Tollington's life was her brother's sad death. He committed suicide, Olive, and he was driven to it by his wife's cruel, reckless conduct; she ran him into debt and disgrace, and then established a private gambling saloon; the police had their eye on it for a long time as cheating was suspected, and one night they made a raid on it, and Mr. Jocelyn (he had been obliged to leave the army), shot himself to avoid being taken."

Olive drew her breath in short, painful pants.

"And you think—"

"I think Mrs. Jocelyn is his widow and that she caused his death."

"Alice, don't, it is too dreadful."

Alice put one arm round her cousin fondly.

"Don't tremble so darling, Mrs. Jocelyn can't harm you; don't you see, Olive, that if anything

happened to you she would lose a hundred a year and a very comfortable home."

"I feel as if I never could take her hand again," said Olive, "Oh! Alice, you don't know, you can't understand how much misery comes from gambling, and that a woman should lure men to their ruin. Oh, shame—shame!"

Alice was frightened at her agitation and the effect it might have on the fragile frame.

"Olive, dear," she whispered, "be brave. If you don't like Mrs. Jocelyn it is quite easy to send her away. You have what some call a fabulous wealth; even if Mrs. Jocelyn demanded her salary to Michaelmas and a quarter's notice besides, it would only be fifty pounds."

"But I could never tell her. I spoke bravely enough to-day, but then I didn't know the sort of woman she was. I could not tell her now that I had found her out."

"Do you know anyone in England, Olive?"

"No one who could help me."

Alice gave a little sigh.

"Didn't you tell me you travelled from the Cape with a very kind old couple?"

"Elderly," corrected Olive. "Yes, Dr. and Mrs. Curtis; they are living at Norwood now. I went to see them when I was at Penge but they were away."

"Well," said Alice bravely, "get them to ask you to stay with them for a fortnight or even a week; when you are safely at Norwood, write and tell Mrs. Jocelyn your plans are changed, in fact give her notice."

"But would she go?"

"She would have to," said Alice, simply, "don't you see if you sent her a cheque for her salary and intimated the Lodge would be closed in a day or two she could have no excuse to linger."

"I think I will try your plan, Alice," said Olive Durant, "but what about you?"

"Oh! I shall not matter," said Alice, bravely, "I can go back to Aunt Grace."

"You shall do no such thing, you shall join me in London as soon as Mrs. Jocelyn is gone, or—are you afraid of being here when she gets my letter?"

"Not afraid; it won't be very pleasant, but I daresay it will blow over. You see, Olive, I know nearly every creature in the place. Dr. Harley would come and 'Read the Riot Act' to Mrs. Jocelyn for me if I asked him."

"Well, we'll drive up to the Towers to inquire for poor Barbara," said Olive, "and when we get back I'll write to Mrs. Curtis."

Mrs. Jocelyn was deeply annoyed when she saw the cousins drive off in the little pony carriage, things were not going at all to her satisfaction. Barbara Fellowes's illness was embarrassing, for the chaperon had calculated on the girl's going over to lunch at the Towers when 'Mr. Morton' could have been admitted in their absence. Now there would certainly be no set invitations given for some time to come, and Bertie would be getting impatient besides, many trifles warned the wily widow that delay was dangerous, she knew that Olive Durant had not forgiven her speech of the morning and that it was in the girl's power to dismiss her at any time.

Miss Armitage coming up to call found Mrs. Jocelyn working industriously at some art embroidery and was very affable; having been frankly told that the widow disapproved of second marriages, Penelope felt no danger for Noel in being agreeable to her and save for her overworn anxiety for her beloved brother the old maid was by no means hard hearted or unfeeling. She "looked up" Mrs. Jocelyn because she pitied her, not perceiving what a very comfortable post the widow had, and also, just a little in a spirit of opposition because the vicar had said bluntly he could not bear her.

"By the way," said Miss Penelope, "that delightful friend of yours, Mr. Morton, is over at High Cliff to-day. Noel met him in the village, just before I started."

The girls were going to do a little shopping after the call at the Towers, and as the town was some miles off, Mrs. Jocelyn felt safe till lunch time. Miss Penelope's manner was most affable, and she decided to make a tool of the old maid.

"I wish I had met Mr. Morton," she said



FERCY FELLOWES STROLLED AIMLESSLY ON UNTIL A VOICE CALLING HIS NAME MADE HIM START.

frankly, "for there are several little business matters I want to talk to him about, he was such a friend of my poor husband's."

"Surely he will call here," said Miss Armitage.

"He will hardly venture to do so uninvited, he is so very punctilious, and, indeed, Miss Durant has such a strange aversion to Africa—though she has spent nearly all her life there—that I should not venture to invite anyone just returned from the Cape. But to-day every thing would have fitted in beautifully, for she and her cousin will not be home till lunch time."

"It's barely eleven now," said Miss Armitage, rising to go. Her calls were generally paid at unusual times. "I tell you what, if I meet Mr. Morton again shall I just give him a hint you are at home alone and would like to see him?"

"I should be so thankful! Ah, Miss Armitage, you can't understand the trials of a dependent position. Mr. Morton was like an elder brother to my dear husband, yet for the caprice of a mere girl, I may not show him the least attention, or even have the consolation of talking with him of the past."

"There, there, don't fret," said Miss Penelope, as the widow dried her imaginary tears with a very small handkerchief. "I'm almost sure to meet him, and I'll send him up directly."

Left alone Mabel Jocelyn personally inspected the "light closet" in her own room, which she intended as her brother's hiding place. It was certainly a pity circumstances had caused her imprisonment to begin so early. Had the call been in the afternoon his confinement would only have lasted five hours, now it would be fully nine. She removed a few of the dresses so as to leave ample room, brought some wine and a box of biscuits from the buffet in the dining-room, and having thus prepared for her prisoner's creature comforts she walked down the corridor to Olive's room, it was unlucky for her purpose that there were two apartments between Olive's and her own. Still more unlucky that she did

not know if Miss Durant was in the habit of locking her door.

"I must make sure of it," she said to herself, putting the key in her pocket; "if she did lock it our game would be up. I hope she won't make a fuss when she finds the key gone. Still I shouldn't think she was in the habit of locking the door, few girls do. I only hope Alice Melville is a heavy sleeper, for Bertie must go past her door. Would it be safe, I wonder, to give her a little dose; a pinch of something in her tea; better not, perhaps, that girl is as sharp as a needle, and I am pretty sure she has not much faith in me already."

Miss Armitage was as good as her word, and in less than half-an-hour from her departure, Mr. Morton was announced.

"You don't look well, Mab," he said, as soon as they were alone, giving her a careless kiss. "What's the matter?"

"How can I look well when you will run such needless risks? What in the world induced you to go to see Barbara Fellowes, and frighten her into an illness?"

"I didn't 'go to see her,' she met me by appointment, and a nice little sum rewarded me for the enterprise. While the corn's growing the steed starves. Mab, I can't live on air while you're getting ready for the grand meeting with Miss Durant?"

"It had better be to night."

"The sooner the better. I can assure you I shall be thankful to get out of this neighbourhood."

"And you mean to ask for five hundred pounds?"

"Five thousand," he retorted, "she's so rich she'll never miss it, and I fancy my lady will give even that sum gladly to be rid of me. I don't see why I shouldn't make hay while the sun shines. In a year or two Olive Durant may have found out how much society forgives to an heiress—she won't be so ready to come down with hush money then."

"Or she may have found out about Barbara Fellowes."

"She must know of that old affair already," he said carelessly, "anyone in the neighbourhood could tell her."

"Well, I really think you had better be introduced to your hiding-place; in a few minutes the servants will be passing through the hall preparing lunch."

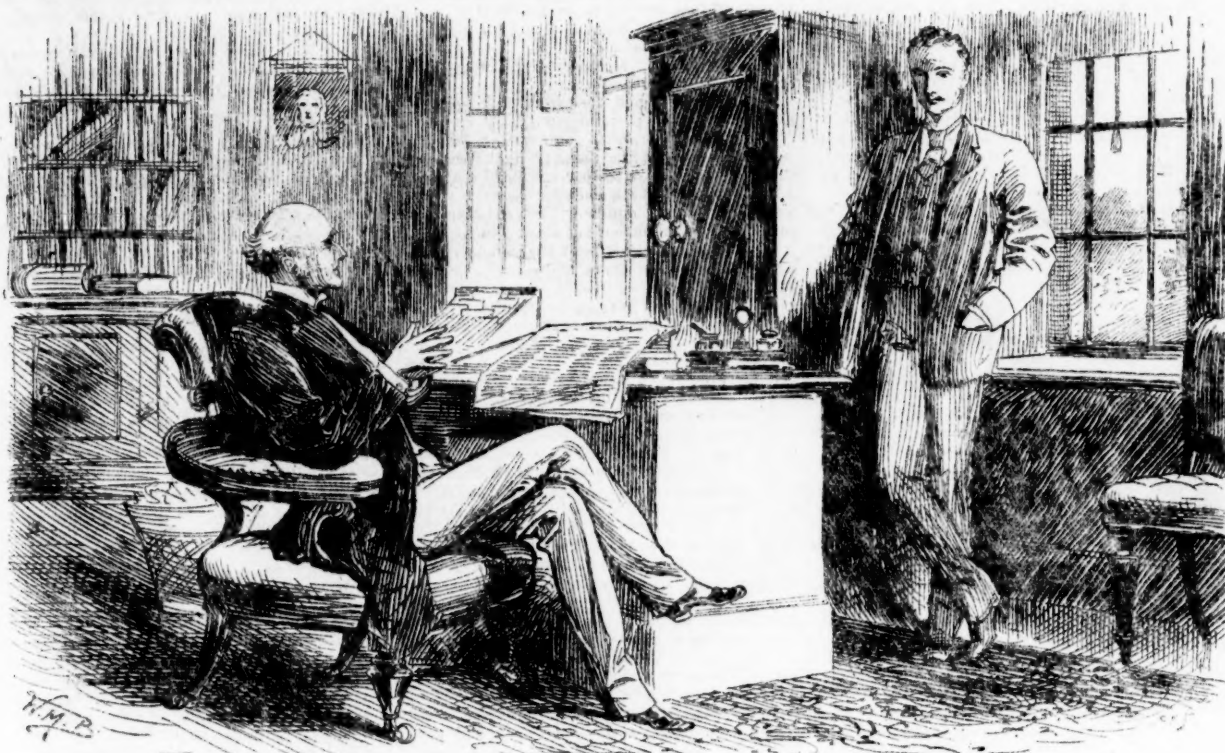
"Do send the household to bed early," expostulated Lang, "why it's barely one, I shall have nine mortal hours of it."

"I'll do my best," she returned, "and, remember, Bertie, we stand or fall together. If you get this—this windfall, I'll throw up my post here and join you abroad. I'm about tired of respectability."

(To be continued.)

In the fifteenth century, as well as in the nineteenth, the doors of universities were open to women not only to study but to teach within their sacred precincts. In the University of Salamanca women had a place, and when Isabella of Spain desired to acquire the Latin tongue it was to a woman she turned for a tutor. In Italy, even in the thirteenth century, a notable Florentine lady won the palm of oratory in a public contest in Florence with learned doctors from all over the world.

The people of Russia, as a rule, speak only their own tongue. A large proportion of them cannot read the bewildering characters—Roman, Greek, and composite—which form their alphabet, and to help their ignorance the shop walls are covered over with rudely-painted pictures of articles for sale within. The butcher's shop has a picture of meats of all sorts and shapes; the tailor's walls are covered with paintings of coats and trousers. The pills of the apothecary, and the vegetables of the greengrocer, are advertised by pictures upon the doors and windows of their stores.



"WELL? OUT WITH IT," SAID MR. MAINWARING IN HIS QUICK, BUSINESS WAY.

## O MISTRESS MINE!

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### CHAPTER V.

#### DON AND HIS FATHER.

It was the early morning-time of the day that Mrs. Wentworth had decided on for her lawn-tennis party at Ivylands.

Loudon Mainwaring, at first grimly undetermined, had ultimately promised Millicent that he would accompany her and Ursula; and Milly, really not caring to go without her beloved brother, had been rendered happy by the promise she had extracted from him.

As for the gentle Ursula, she was delighted, in her own quiet fashion, at the prospect of meeting Miss Diwiddie, and possibly also the old lady's clerical nephew, the Reverend Mark Sparrow, rector of Eve's—a lovely old church, forsooth, beautiful almost as a cathedral.

Lawyer Mainwaring was seated at his desk, in his own private office; and, for a wonder, Loudon himself was closeted therein too.

The hands of the black-marble clock upon the mantel-piece of the private office pointed to the hour of ten.

The substantial mahogany chairs were seated in claret-coloured leather; and the carpet which covered the floor was a Turkey one, rich in subdued colours.

On the whole, Mr. Mainwaring's private room was not unlike the parlour of a flourishing city banker.

The father, as has been said, was seated at his desk; the son, standing near it, leaned his strong young shoulders against the long oaken shutter of the window.

His hands were thrust into his jacket pockets, and his long straight legs crossed carelessly as he stood there.

Breakfast over in the house, father and son had come straightway together to the office; for Mr. Mainwaring had expressed a wish, only that very

morning at table, in the presence of Don himself and his sisters, that something definite and final should be settled at once as regarded Loudon's future, before—as the old lawyer put it gravely—the baneful indulgence in the matter of too much play should have made the notion of all work irksome and distasteful.

"You know, my dear boy," the old gentleman was saying kindly, with the white finger-tips of his two hands joined nicely together, "that, in my opinion, you have been idling at home long enough, quite long enough, as you have heard me remark several times before to-day. 'Make hay whilst the sun shines,' is unquestionably an admirable old maxim; but, Don, my dear son, 'work bravely in your young days, and you'll never regret it in your old,' is, in my opinion, quite as good a one, if not a better, to shape your conduct on. What say you, Don?"

"In my opinion," was old Mr. Mainwaring's favourite conversational phrase; it escaped him on all occasions—being given always with much unction and marked emphasis on the personal pronoun.

Don's straight dark eyebrows were drawn together. His handsome red mouth, with its line of silky raven down, looked just a little stern.

"Yes, father," he answered, slowly and thoughtfully. "I have no doubt that you are perfectly right. But still, sir—"

Here the young man hesitated, and his dark eyes sought the carpet rather troubledly.

"Well? Out with it," said the old gentleman, in his quick, business way.

"I—I—if you, sir, have no objection—that is to say," stammered Don. "I should be glad, even now, father, of just a little further grace, before I determine anything finally and irrevocably."

Mr. Mainwaring tugged somewhat viciously at his big white collar and black satin stock, and pushed up his stubbly gray hair on either side of his bald forehead.

He looked, now, as resolute as his own son Loudon could look on occasion, when the lion

was stirred within him, and a strong will clashed with his own.

"In the name of all sense and goodness," spoke the lawyer testily at length, "how much longer do you want, my boy? If you intend to become a man of law-business like myself and your forefathers—and let me tell you now, Don, that, in my opinion, it is the best, and indeed the only thing that you can do with propriety and advantage, you being my only son—I say, if you intend to follow sensibly in the footsteps of your father, what on earth is there to hinder you from settling down here with me in this room, on this very morning, or to-morrow, say, or the day after—eh?" sharply. "Nothing that I can think of, or you either."

"I do not ask for long," Loudon said, looking up—"not many hours, in fact. Father, you know that I am going with the girls to the Wentworths' this afternoon," speaking hurriedly, his handsome, boyish face flushing—"and whilst there, some time or other, I mean to ask Guinevere Wentworth to be my wife. Should her answer to me be favourable—and with all my soul I pray that it may be—why, then I will settle down here with you, sir, and let help you, and serve you, and work for you with a right good will, sir, until you may see fit to give your consent to our union with each other."

"I love her dearly. I have known her nearly all my life. You, father, have known her for many years also, and therefore, I should imagine, can have no personal objection whatever to raise in the matter of this choice of my heart."

"Should she, however,"—drawing a hard breath—"refuse me, why, in that case, away I must go for a time. I can't stop in Grayminster. And should I ever return to the old home, heart-whole and cured, then order me as you will, sir, and I will obey."

Lawyer Mainwaring was not in the least surprised or put out by this outbreak and confession on the part of his son.

He and Guinevere Wentworth had known each other, as Don reminded his father, almost from

earliest childhood, when the two had been playfellows and little lovers together even then.

"This affair then, Don," observed the old gentleman reflectively, "this doubt and uncertainty as to whether or not Guinevere Wentworth's love were yours, has been the sole cause, I take it, of your late instability—lack of settled aim and purpose—and all the rest of it, eh?"

"That, sir, and nothing else in the world," answered Loudon, earnestly.

"Why the dickens, my boy, haven't you asked her before?" inquired his father, more kindly. "I'm never the one to blame a young man for marrying early, so long as he is sure of himself and the woman he wants for his own. Indeed, in my opinion, it is the best thing that can happen to 'em both."

Loudon Mainwaring smiled and shrugged his shoulders slightly.

"Why have not I spoken to Guinevere before this?" said he. "Really, father, I can hardly answer the question. But there are times, you know, when one feels an experiment to be a bit hazardous, and when one shrinks, albeit it must be tried sooner or later, from taking the actual plunge, until one's very cowardice makes one ashamed of oneself, don't you know?"

"Umph!" said Mr. Mainwaring senior; adding—"Then Don, my boy, I shall expect from you an answer of some sort to-night?"

"Certainly, sir. On my return from Ivylands. We shall not be late."

"I shall be at home, Don—and up," Mr. Mainwaring said, briefly.

"All right, father. You are quite certain that you have no objection at all to make in the affair?" Loudon inquired, deferentially.

"I assure you, my lad, none in the world. I only want to see you happy—as happy as I was when I married your mother, the lovely Miss Loudon of Pockington, as she was always called," said the old gentleman, dreamily. "Don, you are very like her."

"I am glad to know it, sir. I suppose," added the young fellow, wistfully, his olive cheek flushing again, as he moved towards the office-door, "you would not be over hard upon us, father, if Guinevere should say 'yes'! I mean you would not expect us to wait an unreasonable time before—before we—"

"Bless my soul, no!" struck in Mr. Mainwaring, thumping his desk, and turning briskly to the blue documents that were awaiting his attention—"why, what did I say just now about early marriage? There is no reason in the world why you and Guinevere should wait a day longer than you wish to. You are well off, Don—you have the whole of your dear mother's fortune—and Guinevere herself, I should say, will have something respectable of her own, though possibly not much. If she'll have you, Don, take and marry her to-morrow. I won't stand in your way."

Loudon Mainwaring stepped back from the door and wrung his father's hand warmly.

"Thank you, sir," said he, fervently—"thank you!"

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE GARDEN PARTY AT IVYLANDS.

Just then Loudon Mainwaring, in thanking his father so fervently for the paternal goodwill, had forgotten entirely all about that hateful rumour concerning Guinevere and Sir Angus Adair which was rife amongst the gossips and busy-bodies throughout the town of Grayminster. In fact, the two names were coupled together everywhere now; and Loudon knew that it was so—but, for the moment, happily, the fact had slipped wholly from his memory.

As for the old lawyer himself, gossip and scandal, with him, went in at one ear and out at the other.

"Tut, tut!" said the old gentleman, with assumed peevishness—assumed to disguise his real feelings—"there, go along, and let us trust that there may be no disappointment in store for you, my boy."

And then, recurring once more to the old vexed question between them, he added,—

"And I am to understand then, that you will be a man of law in either case?"

The young man, for the second time, had reached the office doorway.

"Yes," he answered, cheerfully, looking round "either way, sir, I promise you—in the end."

And then he marched out, and closed the private door behind him, passing brightly through the midst of the scribbling clerks in the outer office, with a nod and a smile for each one there, all envying him involuntarily his handsome presence and superabundance of worldly luck.

Loudon Mainwaring's heart was feeling feather-light, and all presentiment of failure in his love affair with Guinevere was, at any rate for the time being, put out of mind completely.

His father's genuine kindness in the matter, his promised favour towards the girl whom his son loved, had doubtless done much in the dispelling of the young man's fears on the score of the ultimate success of his wooing.

All her past nonchalance and indifference, all her strange, inexplicable vagaries of temper, were in like manner, for the time forgotten absolutely, and Don felt confident now that, if he could but gain, somehow, a favourable opportunity for speaking with her quietly and reasonably, during the time that would be spent that day at Ivylands, everything in the end would turn out all right, and in the most satisfactory manner both for himself and for Guinevere.

Crossing the large low hall on his way from the office, he met his sister Millicent.

She, on seeing him emerge from the "business-passage," as the household called it, guessed that the conference was over.

"Well, Don, dear?" she cried gaily, nodding her head mysteriously in the direction of the passage entrance, "what did you say, and what did father say? Nothing is settled, I hope—nothing, I mean, that will take you from us just yet! Oh, you must not leave us before the end of the summer!"

"I hope not, Milly," he returned gravely; "indeed, I pray not, with all my heart. But, you see, I cannot tell you for certain, dearie, until—until—well, until by-and-by."

Milly Mainwaring opened her blue eyes wide.

"Why cannot you tell me now, then, Don?" she asked.

"I will tell you, Milly, after the Wentworths' garden-party," he answered.

"You puzzle me rather, Don," Millicent said, thoughtfully. "What is it that you wish me to understand?" lifting her fair frank face inquiringly to his.

He smiled lovingly down into those upturned forget-me-not eyes.

"Shall I whisper the secret?" said he.

"Yes, if you will," replied Milly at once.

She raised herself on her toes, and he lowered his dark wavy head to a level with her pretty fair "fringe."

The whisper seemed rather a lengthy one; and when it was ended, Millicent exclaimed,—

"Oh, Don dear, is that really it?"

"Really and truly. Will you not wish me joy and success, my pretty Mill?"

"I do, dear—believe me, I do!" she whispered gravely, but very earnestly.

"Well, you needn't mention it to Ursula, you know," Loudon remarked; "at any rate, Milly, not until I give you permission, don't you know? Or she, in all probability, at the very first chance this afternoon, will pass it all on, in strict confidence, of course, to that awful old Dinwiddie woman; and then she, in her turn—"

"Loudon!" interposed Millicent, with a hurt, reproachful look, "I think you should know me better."

"It's all right, little girl," was Don's smiling rejoinder. "But you see—Hark, Milly! That is Ursula herself upstairs calling for you."

"But, Don dear, you do trust me thoroughly, do you not?" persisted Millicent, somewhat more than a trifle hurt at his seeming want of faith in herself, who was so true and staunch always in his interests. "I do not like the thought of being doubted by you."

"Dear, you are as true as steel, and I know

it," he returned, tenderly. "That was only my nonsense just now. There—Ursula is calling again. Cut along, Milly!"

And Milly did "cut along;" but her face, when she joined her sister Ursula upstairs, in the small snug sitting-room which the two girls shared in common, was decidedly clouded and sorrowful.

It was curious perhaps; but, somehow or other, Millicent Mainwaring could not bring herself to view in so hopeful and confident a light that which Loudon had just now imparted to her, and believed in so hopefully and confidently himself.

"He is too sanguine," she told herself, sadly, over and over again. "How will he bear it—if he is doomed to disappointment! Oh, my darling brother, I would to Heaven that my fears were groundless!"

The afternoon turned out delightfully fine, and most suitable and propitious in every way for an outdoor summer entertainment; the warm sunshine being tempered by a pleasant breeze that sighed rather than blew from the soft south-west.

By half-past three o'clock the southern lawn at Ivylands, shady and sweetly cool under the spreading elms and dusky larches, was brilliant with the hues of the pretty frocks of the ladies who had responded to Mrs. Wentworth's invitation for the event.

No play of any kind had yet begun; but everyone was strolling, chatting, or exploring the lovely garden in the delightful shade of the trees.

Some were sitting on the garden seats, which were placed conveniently around the great elm-trunks; and some of the gentlemen were already drifting towards that portion of the lawn which lay nearest to the house, where, hard by the open French windows of the dining-room, a well-stored refreshment marquee was situated.

Nearly everyone expected that afternoon at Ivylands was already on the scene of action. But the Mainwarings had not yet arrived; and Guinevere, capricious as usual, perhaps even more so to-day, declined, for some reason or other, to commence operations without them.

"Oh, do let us begin something at once!" had exclaimed Mrs. Wentworth piteously, laying a heavily-jewelled white hand with an affected, beseeching air, upon the coat-sleeve of Sir Angus Adair. "We are wasting all the best of the afternoon, and everybody, I am certain, is growing tired of waiting!"

Mrs. Wentworth looked wonderfully juvenile in mauve and white, wearing, too, a good deal of her valuable lace.

Her fluffy false locks were arranged in the latest style, and were protected merely by the Japanese sunshade which she carried and twirled so coquettishly.

There were to be croquet "tournaments" as well as tennis "matches"; for Mrs. Wentworth had read lately, in her favourite society journal, that croquet was fast returning into fashionable favour once more—and the lady was nothing if not "fashionable" and up-to-date.

"I am at your service," Sir Angus Adair had replied, shooting a swift meaning glance, half-questioning, half-pleading, towards Guinevere, listless and lovely beyond description in misty white and old-gold. "Only, I suppose," said he, with his grave, sweet-tempered smile, "one should first of all see after one's courts and sets!"

"Of course," gushed Mrs. Wentworth. "One can do nothing until that has been accomplished. Guinevere, darling, let us attend to the business at once."

"The Mainwarings will soon be here now," returned Guinevere, idly. "You, mother, and Sir Angus may get a set together if you like. Whichever I play, I want Millicent Mainwaring on my side, and I am going to wait for her."

"Ah, then," said Mrs. Wentworth, sweetly, controlling her ruffled feelings admirably, although she burned secretly to box the ears of Guinevere, "Ah, then, my dear Sir Angus, I must commit my daughter to your charge for just a little while; for here come the Chumleighs—they are always disgracefully late everywhere—and I must go and speak a welcoming word to them."

Miss Dinwiddie and her nephew were hover-

ing about the skirts of Guinevere. So Mrs. Wentworth, turning to the pair with a sort of playful sharpness, added:

"You do not know the Chumleighs, I think, Miss Dinwiddie! Come with me now, and I will introduce you and Mr. Sparrow. They are people like Miss Mainwaring, absolutely wrapped up, don't you know, in church and parish work?"

"With pleasure," smirked Miss Dinwiddie; and trotted away obediently in the wake of Mrs. Wentworth. The Reverend Mark, however, was more obtuse. He only smiled vacantly, and did not budge.

"I presume, Miss Wentworth," he ventured timidly—he was an exceedingly mild-mannered young man, priest-shaven and goggled, in creaseless clerical broadcloth and immaculate linen—"I presume, Miss Wentworth, that Mr. Mainwaring and—and his sisters are scarcely likely to disappoint you at the last moment! Miss Ursula told my aunt only yesterday that they, without fail—"

"Would be sure to come?" put in Guinevere graciously. "Yes, I hope so. They are simply a little late, like the Chumleighs—that is all, Mr. Sparrow. And see! Here comes the wagonette just turning the corner of the road—Mr. Mainwaring himself driving, and his sisters behind."

Catching a faint glimpse of Ursula's white hat in the distance, between hedge and tree, the Rector of St. Eve's flushed a nervous but joyous pink.

Guinevere turned abruptly to Sir Angus Adair.

"You know the Mainwarings," she said; "do you not?"

"I know young Mainwaring slightly," he answered. "I never had the opportunity of meeting his sisters."

"You will like Millicent," she returned carelessly.

"Shall I? If you say so, I do not doubt it," he rejoined heartily, but deferentially as ever.

The wagonette stopped at the drive-gates; and the girls alighting, Mrs. Wentworth's man took the horses from Loudon Mainwaring.

Guinevere went to meet her friends, and Sir Angus Adair strolled after her intuitively.

She could not fail to mark how thunderous Don's face became in an instant, on observing the owner of Minister Court in such close proximity to herself. The two men, however, shook hands civilly enough.

For although Loudon Mainwaring regarded Sir Angus in the decided light of an enemy and a rival, young Mainwaring, in the eyes of Sir Angus Adair, was nothing more or less than a very old and privileged friend of the Wentworth family—as such had Guinevere herself and Mrs. Wentworth always represented him, whenever they spoke of Don in his presence. And Adair, in his manly worth and honest simplicity, had never dreamed that it could be otherwise than that which they would have him believe.

So he cherished, of course, not the least animosity in the world towards the young man; on the contrary, indeed, he was rather disposed to like him.

Certainly they did not as yet know much of each other; but what the master of Minister Court had hitherto seen of young Mainwaring he liked in him unquestionably.

Hence Sir Angus Adair could scarcely understand the cool civil greeting, lacking all cordiality, with which, on this afternoon, at Ivylands, young Loudon Mainwaring thought fit to favour him.

It was the first time that the two men had met each other since rumour had been busy with the coupling of Guinevere's name with that of Sir Angus Adair.

"Sir Angus," said Guinevere gracefully, "let me introduce you to Miss Mainwaring, Miss Mainwaring—Sir Angus Adair, Miss Millicent Mainwaring—Sir Angus Adair."

The Mainwaring girls bowed brightly and easily in acknowledgment of the introduction; and Milly Mainwaring, glancing swiftly up at him from beneath the deep lace edging of her sunshade, told herself emphatically that she

liked the kindly, bronzed, bearded face much on near inspection, and wondered whether, upon closer acquaintance, the Baronet might prove as "nice" as he looked.

Mrs. Wentworth, in all her bravery, now floated down on the little group.

"Ah, Don," she said prettily—"how do you do? Ursula—Milly, I am charmed to see you both. What a perfect day for us all, is it not? Darling Guinevere, perhaps you will now assist me in getting the people together, and in finding out those who like to play, and those who prefer sitting about and looking on? Sir Angus, I am sure, will be your willing lieutenant—will not you?"—very sweetly, this, to Adair.

Of course he would be only too happy! His eyes would have said so plainly, even though his lips had not.

Then Miss Dinwiddie, unexpectedly, tripped up to Ursula.

"We are going to play croquet over yonder by the laurels," cried she shrilly, "will you not join us, dear Miss Mainwaring? They say it is newer than tennis, and quite *comme il faut* again."

Of course, I individually, am going to make no rash attempts—and Mark himself is an execrable player, he says! So it would be so kind of you to come on his side, and help to fight his battles through the hoops. Lady Chumleigh herself is making up the side over there. Do not refuse me, dear Miss Mainwaring! I besought Miss Dinwiddie, clasping together her little mittened hands.

Blushing brightly, Ursula acquiesced willingly and departed across the lawn with Miss Dinwiddie.

"Milly," Don whispered, "you stay here with me. If I take either bat or mallet, it will be somewhere with you and Guinevere—not otherwise. That brute will be hanging about her, of course, wherever she is."

"Brute, Don! What brute?"

"Why, Adair," he answered, impatiently, almost indeed savagely, so sore was the heart within him. And he stared gloomily over to that part of the grounds where Guinevere with Sir Angus in close attendance, was busy beating up recruits.

"Oh, do you know, he is not really so bad!" said Milly, magnanimously. "And people, I fancy, must be altogether mistaken in supposing that there is anything serious between him and Guinevere. Observe, Don dear, how awfully cool she is to him!"

"That is her way, Milly," said the young man, moodily, "one of her maus, and I think that I know them all. I ought to. However, never mind, I'll tell you the truth later on."

She understood what he meant.

"Milly and Don, you are wanted here," Guinevere called to them. "It is croquet—croquet, as a novelty, has carried the day! Everyone is tired of tennis, and welcomes the change. Cecilia Chumleigh and Kitty Dare—come!—you will complete our set exactly."

"At all events you will be near to Guinevere after all, dear," whispered Milly comfortingly, to her brother, "So don't be down-hearted—but play your boldest and best," she added, meaningly.

"I detest a side of four," said he, discontentedly, disposed to cavil at everything and anything. "The game is always interminable."

Millicent perceived that he had worked himself into anything but an amiable state of mind, and she wished with all her heart that she could make things smoother and pleasanter for him. But what could she do?

"There are such a lot of people to amuse," she reasoned gently, "and of course they must be amused somehow now they are here, dear! It would be impossible for them to arrange matters better and differently, I fancy, and it is so like Mrs. Wentworth, you know, to invite more than she can look after and entertain," added Milly Mainwaring, cheerfully.

"Hang the whole lot of 'em, then!" said Don viciously, as with Millicent he crossed over to their party.

## CHAPTER VII.

## AND WHAT IT LED TO.

AND soon, in a business-like manner, friends and enemies intermingled, and the first player on Guinevere's side opened the game forthwith.

Sir Angus was voted "captain" of one four, and Loudon Mainwaring of the other; and the remaining men in the hostile eight were Cecilia Chumleigh's brother, and the Reverend Mark Sparrow's younger curate.

Loudon Mainwaring, after all, found himself on the side of Guinevere; for that young lady, at the eleventh hour, took it into her head to declare that she could not possibly do without him.

"I shall want your strong arm and unerring aim, Don," she told him carelessly, "to rescue me from all chance peril."

And this totally unlooked-for mark of favour from her had restored his good-humour completely, rendering him for the time being unspeakably happy.

Sir Angus himself was too much of the kindly gentleman to reveal either by open word or act the chagrin which he naturally felt at being against, and not for, the interests of Guinevere in the game, as he fondly hoped to be.

As her foe in the tournament he was separated from her constantly; and separation, no matter in how trivial a form now, from Guinevere Wentworth, meant simply wretchedness for Sir Angus Adair.

The warm afternoon air was smitten very pleasantly with the continual sharp "click—click click!" of the rolling balls, and the voices and the laughter of the players.

The lawn at Ivylands altogether was perhaps the most spacious one in the neighbourhood; and several sets were now in full play. The tennis courts were also occupied; and also therefrom came the shouting of the players, running and leaping incessantly in the mysteries and mazes of that more robust game.

The majority of Mrs. Wentworth's guests, however, preferred sitting about on the garden-seats, cool and comfortable in the shade of the elms, sipping champagne-cup and watching the contests, and, better perhaps than all, quizzing and dissecting generally the distant unconscious players.

"I, for one, dislike tennis immensely!" confessed Mrs. Wentworth, with her latest air of juvenility, "to me the game seems nothing in the world but one long senseless race and romp from start to finish—surely the most restless and fatiguing pastime ever invented for the weariness of mankind! And as for croquet itself, don't you know, I care for it only when I am allowed to play unmolested in my own peculiar way."

"Which way," laughed genial Lady Chumleigh, coming up, mallet in hand, in time to overbear, "would be, I suspect, distinctly illegal!"

"Possibly you might deem it so," agreed Mrs. Wentworth, all smiles and flashing teeth. "Just a little tiny kick with one's toe, don't you know, if one's ball shows itself troublesome, and an accommodating cavalier who will aid one in getting it through those wretched hoops either by hook or by crook, and all like that, don't you know?"

"Yes, I know. And I should not care to play with you!" put in Lady Chumleigh, laughing; who was one of those warm-souled, pure-hearted matrons who never seem to grow old, or to lose a healthy interest in the sports and pleasures of the young. She had been even known to "field" at a pinch at cricket for the younger boys at home. Young men adored her. Her own tall sons voted her the "jolliest" of good mothers. A wholesome contrast, forsooth, to the frisky, "end-of-the-century" matrons, to be found in the London ball-rooms of to-day!

"Wanted—Three Red!" called Ursula's sweet soprano.

"Dear me! I am Three Red, I believe," said Lady Chumleigh. "I must run away!"

And then Mrs. Wentworth turned her attention again to the friends immediately around her.

Guinevere's side, with Loudon's strong arm and unerring aim dealing out certain confusion and

destruction withersoever his feet ball sped, was doing more than well.

The young fellow's spirits were as light as air again, for he was perpetually near to Guinevere, and that was sufficient for the present; albeit every now and then she snubbed him unhesitatingly.

But then she snubbed Sir Angus Adair equally, and in like manner, and so Loudon didn't care a rap.

And Millicent, too, perceived with relief, that Don was perfectly cordial now to Sir Angus, whenever the two crossed and spoke to each other; and, if they did not exactly fraternise quite so readily as she could have wished to see, seeing them as they at present were was certainly a great deal better than she had expected things to be between them at the beginning of the afternoon.

On the whole it was a pleasant gathering for all; and as Mrs. Wentworth said gushingly to her dear friend Sir Angus, afterwards, everything had gone off, she believed, without a hitch.

Towards seven o'clock, however, the combatants in the several games began to show symptoms of surfeit; the idlers and strollers likewise were trying politely not to look bored; and some of them, thinking of dinner, were openly impatient for the ordering of the carriages.

Guinevere's side had in the end come off with flying colours. After a good fight of nearly three hours, the victory had been signal and complete, thanks to Don Mainwaring's judgment and skill.

Mrs. Wentworth had ordered fresh tea and coffee for the players; and now, cup and saucer in hand, they were assembled under the elms with the rest, laughing and chatting gaily over the late conflict. Guinevere was resting on a campstool, Sir Angus and Loudon Mainwaring both in her vicinity.

"Look at them over there!" whispered Miss Smythe, a gossip-loving spinster from the Packington neighbourhood. "Which of the two should you say was the favoured one?"

"Which two do you mean?" inquired Lady Chumleigh quickly, to whom the question had been addressed.

"There—yonder—with Miss Wentworth herself," said Miss Smythe with a pregnant giggle. "Do you know whether she is engaged to Sir Angus Adair?"

"My dear soul, how should I know?" returned Lady Chumleigh good-humouredly. "But, really, I should say not, or, if indeed to either of them—to young Mainwaring, decidedly. The other, Sir Angus, is merely an ordinary friend of theirs—their landlord in fact."

"But 'the other' is here at Ivylands the more frequently of the two," declared Miss Smythe significantly—"at least, so I am informed by Miss Dinwiddie, who knows all the news of the parish. It would be a remarkably good catch if she can get him."

"I do not believe that she is trying," said good Lady Chumleigh, who never lent her ear to scandal if she could help it. "Come, Cecilia, child, we must be leaving. Our carriage, I see, is waiting, and stopping the way for others."

And mother and daughter moved off together, to bid adieu to Mrs. Wentworth.

Undetected, unperceived, by anyone, Loudon Mainwaring had led Guinevere away to a quiet and unfrequented corner of the Ivylands grounds.

Unobserved by anyone present, he had asked her for a few clear uninterrupted moments apart from the movement and confusion which the departure of Mrs. Wentworth's guests was occasioning.

And Guinevere, with a cold, hard, sinking sensation at her heart, had consented reluctantly enough.

The evil hour had come at last, she knew—no longer was it possible to evade or defer it! Therefore the sooner it should be over the better.

He had brought her away to a spot where the larch grove was thickest and gloomiest, and where the lilac and the laurel trees cast intermingled shadows over the long pale woodland grasses,

strewn thickly here and there with the dead leaves of a past year.

It was at the farthest extremity of the pretty grounds at Ivylands, where a billowy green meadow formed a portion of their boundary line, and the house itself was nowhere visible, for the wild growth of shrubs and climbing tangled underwood.

It was all very hushed and solemn here, for the summer dusk was deepening perceptibly.

Already was the grass growing wet with dew, and one or two stars had appeared in the sky over the meadow.

Amidst the evening shadows, facing each other at last, the two stood there, together and alone!

The girl's face was woefully pale; and her large violet eyes were wide and distressed.

The young man's arms were folded across his breast, and his handsome face had taken its square, rigid look—a look, as Guinevere knew of old, that always betokened stress and storm.

"And this is your answer," he was saying; but he spoke with a visible effort, and his teeth remained shut—"your only, your final, your unalterable answer, Guinevere?"

"Do not be so tragic over it," she cried faintly, with a sort of sob. "Oh, Don, you are not kind to attack me as you do!"

"Kind!" he echoed scornfully. "Kind? Pray what sort of kindness do you in reason expect of me, when, loving—worshipping you as I do, you turn round coldly and tell me plainly that I am too young to understand rightly the true meaning of love—that the love I bear you is nothing more than a boy's first infatuation, which in time —"

"You seem a boy to me," she said, in quick interruption, turning her face aside to hide her falling tears. "I am older than you, Don, both in years and in worldly experience. I—I know what is best for both of us, and what I have once said I cannot now unsay."

"I love you like a man, Guinevere—with a man's strength, a man's passion," he cried hotly. "Oh, my love, my dear love, in pity do not send me from you hopeless. I cannot bear it—I cannot, Guinevere."

She sighed heavily, still with her face averted. It was hard, bitterly hard, to hear him pleading thus!

Oh, why would he not take from her a first refusal—why tempt and torture her so cruelly beyond her feeble strength?

"But indeed you are only a boy," she murmured tearfully again. "And—and—"

"Well, and what else?" he demanded roughly, though he strove bravely to keep cool; for she had faltered pitifully, and locked her hands together.

There came then another long-drawn, weariful sigh, but still no audible reply. So he seized the little locked hands in a fierce grip, and found them as cold as ice.

"Yes, I am a boy," he said ironically—"and what more? Come, let's hear it, now we have gone so far."

With a shudder she tried to wrench away her hands; but, failing in the attempt to do so, she perforce let them remain where they were.

"And—and—I do not love you!" she finished, in a frightened, sobbing sort of whisper—"I can never love you—never!" she repeated, a feverish, wild undertone now—"never, I mean, in the way you would have me—in the way you have been asking me to do this evening! I will love you as a friend, Don; but—but never as anything else. Because it is impossible."

He flung the false, cold little hands from his grasp, as he would have flung some poisonous reptile, and seething, passionate words burst from his pale and angry lips.

"You are heartless, cruel, and soulless, Guinevere," he almost shouted—"heartless and false as Delilah of old. You have not spoken the truth—you have lied! Say or do what you may—your love is my own, all my own, and I know it! Do you think that I am blind, and incapable of seeing through your mean, contemptible scheming and ambition, and the part you have been playing —"

"How dare you, Loudon Mainwaring!" she stopped him passionately, his taunts stinging her

intolerably, the more so because of their rough unanswerable truth—and pale no longer, but guiltily red—"how dare you, sir! What, tell me to my face that I am untruthful—that I lie! For shame, Don. Calling me, too, soulless and false into the bargain! Surely such words, from a man to a woman," panting with anger, pain, and humiliation, "are manly in the extreme!—worthy in every wise of a gentleman!"

"Manly, in the circumstances, they may not be—or at least, not courteous," he admitted fiercely, "but to your understanding, I can discern plainly, Guinevere, they are painfully just and true. They strike home too well to please you, is not that it? And think you that it is womanly in a woman to blight and mar the life of a man, when it lies within that same woman's power to gladden and ennoble it, without, too, either the least hardship, sacrifice, or reguence on her part? Possibly you may think so, Guinevere. All the same, I tell you that beneath Heaven's sky this night there lives and moves no woman more base and contemptible than yourself. You have broken my heart—willfully and unpardonably broken it; you have made of my whole future an utter blank. And for what—all for what, Guinevere? Faugh!" said the poor lad, with a gesture of scorn and disgust unspcakable.

The gentle breeze just stirred the leaves and branches around them; they could hear the wheels of a carriage on the road rolling away from the gates of Ivylands.

From over the dim meadow came the plaintive lowing of cattle in a more distant pasture-ground, and the stable clock chimed the quarter past eight.

Guinevere covered and shivered—but she spoke again at last.

"It is useless to blame and abuse me," she said coldly and steadily, with an almost superhuman effort to regain and retain her self-control. "It can be no fault of mine—all the world would say so—if—I do not—and cannot love you!"

And then she turned sick and giddy suddenly, and tottered a step as though she must have fallen. But his arms were still folded on his breast, and the firm, square jaw looked pitiless and immovable.

His dark eyes burned with a dull threatening fire, though the ashen hue of his face, perhaps, surpassed that of the girl before him. In grim silence he regarded her, clinging there for support to the stem of one of the larches; and then she, struggling visibly now for some show of outer calmness, confronted him once more in her unworthiness and sin.

"May Heaven forgive you, Guinevere Wentworth," said Loudon, slowly and impressively, before she could utter another word herself, for her white lips had opened to speak—"it is more than I myself can ever do whilst I live. I, at all events, have spoken the truth this night—your conscience tells you that I have. It only remains for me to say that with the man for whom you have thrown me overboard, I trust you may find happiness; though happiness is more than you deserve at any time; for, without the slightest grain of compunction, you have wrecked and destroyed mine. I pray Heaven, with all my heart and soul, that I may never look upon your cruel face again!"

And then he went away and left her—still clinging there to the larch-stem, with her white face hidden.

Loudon Mainwaring, a changed man in his blighting disappointment, retraced his heavy steps in the direction of the house.

He found the waggone and horses waiting, and Ursula and Millicent in readiness for the homeward drive to Grayminster.

They were standing in the flowered and ivy-covered porch with Mrs. Wentworth herself.

"Oh, Don," exclaimed simple Ursula, who possessed little of her younger sister's tact, "where have you been all this long while? We thought that you were lost, or—or that something dreadful had happened to you—didn't we, Mrs. Wentworth?"

"Truly, yes," assented that lady airily, guessing shrewdly however as to what had been happening, and interpreting favourable conclusions, thankfully, as she termed it, from poor

London's gloomy brow. "No one could find either you, Don, or Guinevere, when people were leaving and wanted to say good-bye just now. Sir Angus Adair was in positive distress."

Loudon winced.

"Come, sir," exclaimed Mrs. Wentworth, playfully malicious, and maliciously playful—"I must know! What have you done with my daughter Guinevere?"

"She will be with you soon, I have no doubt," replied Loudon, stiffly. "Good evening, Mrs. Wentworth, and thank you for the pleasure of the afternoon. Come, Ursula—Milly—aren't you ready?"

"We have been ready ever so long!" said Ursula, mildly injured at his impatient tone. "It was you who kept us waiting, Don."

"Yes, dear," Milly murmured gently, "we are ready now if you are."

Like Mrs. Wentworth, she, too, guessed all too well what must have been happening somewhere at Fylands, to make Don look like that; and her tender heart bled for this brother whom Millicen loved so dearly.

"A happy thought!" cried Mrs. Wentworth, suddenly—"now that you are all here, why not have the horses put back, and stay and dine. Oh do! Sir Angus will be back almost immediately. He has only gone over to the Court to dress."

"Thank you, no," answered Don, gruffly.

They drove home in the sweet mild dusk, Loudon, all the way, speaking never a word either to one sister or the other.

Ursula wondered vaguely at his unusual silence; but Milly, knowing well the reason thereof, wiped away her tears when Ursula was not looking.

(To be continued.)

## CINDERELLA.

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### CHAPTER IX.

TIME went on, it was winter. Snow was deep on the ground, and still no sign of the promised visit from the old Fairy, as Pauline mentally called her. Winter gave place to spring, and spring in turn to summer, and yet, she came not, and Pauline began to think that she was a mental delusion—ditto that terrible adventure in Miss Jones's west wing.

The country was very gay. The lord of a neighbouring manor was coming down to live there at last; and the whole neighbourhood was in a flutter, the female portion of it especially, for was he not immensely rich—a great light in the political hemisphere—and unmarried? People said he was too much taken up with the business of his party to give a thought to anything else. But a late session and hot days and nights of hard work had knocked him up, and he had come down to the manor, to which he had been so long a stranger, for complete rest. He was not to open a book or to write a letter; he was to do nothing.

Now was the time to take him at advantage, thought all the mothers with marriageable daughters for miles round. He would have ample leisure for hours of dalliance at lawn parties, picnics, race meetings, and even balls. He must go to the Duke's ball, of course—in fact, he was expected to make his first appearance on that occasion. Royalty would be there, all the county would be there, they had been looking forward to it for the last month—all the county, every girl within miles—except Pauline.

N.B.—Sir Philip was by no means the anchorite people imagined.

Pauline delighted in dancing, and had a natural taste for it, a good ear and a light foot, and many a time she had waltzed about the schoolroom, on wet days, with her dear friend Letty. Her sisters had received a card of invitation for the "Countess Villani and the Misses Rivers."

"Preposterous!" exclaimed Carrie, throwing it down, pettishly; "as if two of a family were not ample. I wonder how they even know of your existence, Pauline—absurd!"

"I am sure I don't know," she returned, meekly, as she took up Carrie's broadened primrose satin, and commenced to renovate the body with some priceless old lace.

"Mind you put it on full—very full," she said, imperiously; "and leave plenty for two ruffles in the sleeves, and be quick. There's the front breadth of the skirt to be taken out yet and turned, and Matilda says you must set to work on her ruby velvet to-morrow, or it will never be done in time. Yes"—approvingly, as she sewed away—"that will do, and a bunch of brown velvet wall-flowers just there, you know. Why, heavens and earth, child," very irritably, "what's this drop of water on my good body—a tear!" tragically. "Disgusting! What on earth are you crying for? Are you sick?" querulously. "I hope to goodness you'll put it off till after the ball!" with amiable candour.

"What are you crying for?" she reiterated, irritably.

"Oh! Carrie, how I wish I was going too!" she exclaimed, clapping her hands, and gazing at her imploringly. "Couldn't I go! Oh! say I could. I'll not be a bit in your way—I'll stay in a corner if only I may see the dancing and the people. Do—do please take me, only for once."

"What nonsense!" she cried, "I really wonder at you. Go to the Duke's ball! I wonder you can propose such a thing. In the first place, two of a family are more than enough; and, in the second place, you have no dress," evidently putting forward this fact as a "clinger."

"Oh! I've an old Indian muslin Matilda gave me," she interrupted, eagerly; "I can sit up at night and do it up quite nicely. I need not take any time from working for you," eagerly.

"Any way, if you had a dress we would not take you—there's no room in the fly, your manners are not formed, you know no one, and you would be quite out of your proper sphere," very decisively; "three women, too! ridiculous."

"What is my proper sphere?" she asked, bitterly—"Dressmaking?"

"Yes," returned Carrie, quite frankly; "you have a great taste that way—quite a talent—no lady ever had such an accomplishment! You take after your mother; you are her image, and we have long come to the conclusion that she was somebody's lady's maid," lowering her voice.

"She was nothing of the sort," exclaimed Pauline, furiously, flinging the broadened body on the floor; "and if you don't retract what you have said I will never sew another stitch for you. How dare you say such things of my mother!"

This was a threat that had great effect on Carrie. Dress was her idol, and Pauline was that idol's high priest, so, after a time, she said, very reluctantly,—

"Well, perhaps she was not. However, you can't deny that there was something very mysterious about her, now can you? And, any way, there's no need to fly into a rage for nothing."

At this moment Phoebe came into the room, looking quite excited and said,—

"There's a person downstairs to see Miss Pauline."

This was the first visitor she had ever had in her life. No wonder the announcement created a sensation.

Pauline's mind at once flew to the "Princess," her grand aunt, and throwing down her work for the second time, and not waiting to attend to Carrie's questions or speculations, she ran very quickly downstairs.

It was not her aunt, but an elderly woman, who looked her over very sharply as she entered the room.

She felt a keen pang of disappointment as her visitor advanced with a begging petition for the children of sailors lost at sea. Why did she apply to Pauline, and why did she scrutinize her with

such keen, critical glances, as if she was mentally measuring her from top to toe?"

She hastily assured her that she had no means of helping her in any way, unless a shilling (it was her only one) would be of any service to her. This she produced from a wrinkled old leather purse, and handed it over timidly.

The stranger accepted it with thanks, and curtseyed herself away, keeping her eyes upon Pauline till the door was closed between them.

"The idea of asking for you!" cried Carrie, contemptuously. "She meant me, you stupid Phoebe! What does any one want with Miss Pauline? Preposterous!"

"Well, any way, the person asked for Miss Pauline, and had her name as pat as you please," returned Phoebe, rather sulkily, and the subject dropped.

The great day of the ball dawned at last—a lovely day.

Pauline was up at dawn, and hard at work for hours before breakfast on matchless ruby velvet, and, thanks to her industry, the great business was satisfactorily completed by twelve o'clock, and the whole long summer afternoon was entirely her own property.

The house was quiet—Matilda and Carrie were both lying down so as to be quite "fresh" for the fatigues of dressing and the evening's revelry—so putting on a big shaded hat and taking up a book she strolled out into the pleasure-grounds.

Poor pleasure-grounds! What would Grant have said if he saw them now!

High, rank grass concealed the very shape of the beds, moss covered the gravel, statues lay prone beside their pedestals, the walks between the shrubs were impassable in many places from tangled branches and a dense growth of unrestrained underwood.

Pauline sat down on an old stone seat, and tried to concentrate her thoughts on the book in her hand. It was useless.

The fire, and a comfortable arm chair, and a pouring day, with rain lashing the panes, was the best surroundings for enjoyment of that kind (especially if the mind is not dwelling on other matters) not a balmy July afternoon, with waving flowers, booming busy bees, and gaudy butterflies all about one.

The insect world were enjoying themselves—it was the season of enjoyment. All young things had their day, was she never to have hers? Pauline asked herself hopelessly.

She got up, and walked away mechanically towards the woods, with her hat over her arm, and very bitter, discontented feelings in her heart.

Why was she to be different to other happy girls? For what was she being punished by this blighted life?

She was eighteen; she had not a friend in the world except Letty, from whom she was divided by the length of England. She had not even a pet animal, no amusement, no variety from year's end to year's end.

She felt all the bitterness of the pinch of poverty in the house beyond, but had none of the alleviations her sisters experienced. It was her business and their pleasure that she should sit at home and sew, like the girl in the song of the shirt.

Thinking these thoughts she rambled on, and unwittingly passed their own boundaries and into their neighbour's. It did not signify—she had often done so before, and never met a soul.

At last she sat down on a great log, and leaning her back against the trees behind her, worn out by her early rising, and the heat, and her walk all combined, she fell asleep.

How long she had been asleep she could not tell, perhaps two minutes, perhaps two hours, but she was awoke by something soft licking her hand. It was a dog's tongue—a beautiful brown and white spaniel, who was gazing at her with enquiring yellow eyes, and beside him stood a gentleman—a tall, very distinguished-looking man, neither young (to her) nor old, dressed in a light suit, with a soft felt hat drawn over a pair of intensely sleepy blue eyes, that were gazing at her with a curiously intent and critical expression.

She jumped up, feeling very hot and confused.

She was not in the habit of meeting gentlemen, and was trespassing, too. Probably this was the lord of the manor, or his agent. She hurriedly stammered some kind of lame apology—said something about straying in unconsciously, and would not let it occur again.

"Don't go," he said, in a pleasant, rather authoritative voice, as he stooped to pick up her book. "I shall be only too much honoured if you will walk in the woods whenever you please. Pray don't go," he continued, with still more animation. "Sit down again. You are the very first person I have seen since I have come back to the old manor, and I hope we shall become better acquainted. I am Philip Curzon."

Then this was indeed the great man, the desired of all. He did not look at all severe—quite the contrary. There was something so pleasant in his eyes and his smile that impelled confidence.

He took off his hat, and sat down beside her on the log, with his dog's head between his hands, and said,—

"This is Rover, a spoiled spaniel, and now we want to know your name," looking at her with a smile.

"I am Pauline Rivers," she replied, rolling the ribbon of her hat nervously between her fingers, and colouring warmly as she spoke.

"Rivers, Rivers!" he repeated to himself. "Oh, of Mount Rivers. There were two Miss Rivers when I was a lad," looking at her dubiously. "I did not know there was another. Why, though, of course, to be sure. I remember," he added, "there was Cinderella. I beg your pardon, Miss Rivers, but it is not possible that you and she are the same person?" with a mischievous wrinkle in his eyes.

"How did you know that I was called Cinderella?" she asked, evasively, looking into the crown of her hat.

"I was present at a certain soiree in a summer house. I don't know if you recollect it?" impressively.

She naturally remembered it well, and murmured, "Were you the boy?"

"If you call eighteen a boy, Miss Rivers, I was the boy. You see we are old acquaintances?" emphatically.

To this she made no reply, and he proceeded,—

"Where have you been ever since?"

"I have been at school in the North of England until last year," she answered, meekly.

"Never coming home for the holidays?" with raised brows.

"Never coming home for the holidays, as you say."

"And you live with your sisters?"

"Yes," without raising her eyes.

"But I've never heard of you. You don't go anywhere, do you? I've never heard of Miss Pauline, though I often hear of Miss Rivers and the Countess Villani," and he smiled to himself. "I never go anywhere. I stay at home always."

"And pray what do you do?"

"I make dresses," she answered, with evident reluctance.

"Oh, indeed! I see that you are still Cinderella. Tell me, why were there tears on your cheeks just now when you were asleep? It's odd that each time I meet you you should be crying. What were you crying for this time; did she beat you again?" and a peculiar smile curled his lips.

"Mr.—I mean Sir Philip Curzon"—she exclaimed, indignantly. "I don't see why you should cross-question me."

"Mr.—Sir! You are to call me Philip. We have known each other for years, Cinderella," he returned, boldly—"ten years, I declare, and the interest I take in you must be my excuse."

"Nonsense!" she returned, impatiently. "You know it is nonsense, and you are taking advantage of my country ignorance, I am sure, and laughing at me in your sleeve. We met by accident once ten years ago, and now to-day. We are nothing but strangers. I never spoke to you in my life before!"

"Now, Cinderella, that's not kind of you. am not taking advantage of your country

ignorance, I assure you," he returned, emphatically.

"You are treating me as a child," she cried, indignantly. "Please not to call me Cinderella again!"

"Now you are vexed with me, I see; and, believe me, I did not mean to offend you. I want to be friends, and you won't let me, Cinder—I mean Miss Pauline. Look here, I want you to give me a couple of dances this evening. Will you? The first Lancers, for old times' sake, and a waltz, please."

"Do you mean at the Duke's ball?" she asked, tremulously.

"Certainly! Where else did you imagine?"

"I am not going to it," she replied, in a low voice.

"What!" in great amazement, turning half round and looking into her eyes as he spoke—eyes that were, in spite of her, brimming up with tears, to correspond with her tell-tale quivering lips.

"And, why? What is the reason?" he asked, in a lower and more sympathetic voice. "Is it the sisters again?"

She made no answer, but two tears stole out from under her eyelids, and trickled down her cheeks.

"By Jove, what a shame. Of course, they are going!" sarcastically.

To this she merely nodded her head.

"Did you get an invitation?"

"Yes, and they were quite surprised."

"Why won't they take you? Did you ask?"

"Yes, I begged," replied Pauline. "I said I'd go only to look on. I'd give anything even to see it, even through a window. I've never seen anything," she continued, in a broken voice, "but they said two were enough to go, and I had no dress, and I would be out of my place, for I've never been in society, which is true, and I've no manners," and here her feelings quite overpowered her.

"By George," he ejaculated, and then seemed lost in thought. At last he said,—

"Look here, Miss Pauline, you shall go. I'll be even with your sisters. My sister, Lady Farrington, is going, she shall call for you. I'll get her to send over a man with a polite note to your eldest sister at once, asking if she may take you, as she has no young girl to chaperon. They won't say no, will they?"

"It would be no use," she sobbed, more heart-broken now than ever. "I could not go, I've no dress."

Here was an obstacle even to him, and there was another dead silence.

"One of May's," he suggested, timidly, "you would not wear it, and it would be too—too—I don't know what. Could you rig up nothing?" confidentially.

"Nothing!" she replied, hopelessly, with a shake of her head and another burst of tears.

"It's a bad business, I see," he continued, very kindly. "I only wish I could do something. I shan't enjoy myself at all, Cinderella, you have spoiled all my pleasure. I shall be thinking of you sitting at home weeping in the chimney-corner; but, never mind, you shall have something instead. It's hard lines if you are never to go to a dance, nor have any pleasure at all. I——" sitting a few inches closer to his weeping companion, and speaking in a tone of much decision—"I will give a ball for you!"

"You!" she cried, drying her eyes, and looking at him incredulously. "How good of you; but don't, you must not for me, I am told—I mean," hesitating, "you came down here for peace and quiet and rest. Never mind; it—it would be too much—something else may happen. I shall get over this," now trying to speak cheerfully, failing miserably in the effort. "It was only hearing so much of this ball and working at——" here she paused with flaming cheeks, "that made me wish to go so very, very much. I'm not always crying because I can't go to balls," she added, with an attempt at a smile, "and I'm very, very much obliged to you for thinking of asking your sister to take me; but you see it would be no good. Forget all about me, please," rising and holding out her

hand in farewell, "and enjoy yourself very much" this evening, and do not remember Cinderella."

"I should enjoy myself if you were coming," he returned, also rising, and clasping her hand heartily in his. "As you won't be there it will be as great a bore as balls generally are. I shall come and see you very soon," still holding her hand; "you may be sure of that."

"You may come, but you won't see me," she returned quickly, withdrawing her fingers. "I never appear to visitors."

"Oh! don't you? We will see about that," decisively, now walking by her side up the wood, and pulling brambles and branches out of the way of her flimsy cotton garment. In silence they reached the broken palings that led back into the mortgaged remains of Mount Rivers, and here he finally shook hands with her, and she ran away down the path in the wood at the top of her speed. It was getting late, she had still her sisters to dress. As she turned the sharp corner she cast one swift, involuntary glance backwards. Sir Philip was leaning both his elbows on the rails in the place where they had parted, looking after her still. He saw her turn her head, even though at a considerable distance, and waved his hat in a gesture of farewell.

## CHAPTER X.

QUICKLY as she ran, she was barely back in time. Her sisters were both very cross at her long absence, though it was only six o'clock, they had had a light tea, and were all impatient and on the *qui vive* to commence their toilettes.

She commenced with Matilda, dressed her hair, put in her diamond stars to her satisfaction, fastened her dress, arranged her flowers, laces, bracelets, and even buttoned her gloves.

Here she drew a long breath of relief, when she was "done," but she had still the worst half of her task before her—*Carrie*.

Carrie's hair was particularly intractable on this occasion, and had to be taken down three times; then, in lacing up her dress, she unfortunately missed one eyelet hole at the top, and had it all to do over again, and receive a severe scolding as well; in the end, about eight o'clock, they were both equipped and wrapped up carefully in soft mantles and seated in the fly.

They were obliged to go early, as the fly had one or two more journeys to make, and Pauline saw them away from the door with all the fortitude she could assume. Never once had they said, "Pauline, I wish you were coming," or "Thank you, Pauline."

She sat down on the steps, with her chin in her hands, watching the sun set behind the trees, and trying not to think of all the other girls who were at that moment dressing for the ball, when she suddenly heard the sound of wheels coming up the avenue, and, raising her head, she beheld a very grand carriage and pair approaching, with a powdered coachman on the box, and a footman beside him.

It was at the hall door in a minute, and she saw that it contained her grand aunt and the begging woman, and a box.

"There you are, Pauline," cried the old lady, in a high, shrill key, who looked more like a fairy than ever, her white hair all worn in little curls, on her head a velvet cap, with a peaked front, studded with diamonds. "There you are!" she exclaimed, as if she had only seen her yesterday. "Are you ready to come to the ball, my child?"

"To the ball?" she gasped. "Oh, no! My sisters have just gone," she replied, with as much fortitude as she could assume.

"And you are just going. Here, Therese, get out the box, and be quick and dress mademoiselle. I shall come in myself and superintend her toilette."

In another half second the door was opened, a big box handed out and carried carefully up the steps by the footman, the old lady herself following it, and bustled into the house.

She was very small and upright, and had the straightest back in the world.

She was slightly lame, and walked with the aid

of a gold headed cane, which made her look more like an old fairy than ever.

Pauline led them past the gaping petrified Phoebe, up to her own bower—such a shabby little room, with no curtains, one faded strip of carpet, a painted dressing-table, and a tiny glass. Many an Abigail would have turned up her nose at the apartment.

"Get me a chair," said Pauline's aunt imperiously, casting one scorching glance around, "and set to work at once, Therese, and I'll tell her all about it. I've been ill, child," she continued, as Therese bundled the bewildered Pauline out of her cotton frock, and making a wisp of it, flung it contemptuously into a far corner, "and not able to come over before, but I've had you in my mind. I knew this ball was coming off, and it was not likely your affectionate sisters would take you, and it seemed an excellent opportunity for me to come for you unexpectedly, and present you to the assembled world—my world—as my grand-niece. I sent Therese here to look at you and take your measure," here her grand-niece interrupted her with a little cry of delight and admiration as Therese quietly shook out the most exquisite dress she had ever beheld.

It had been in the mysterious box—a white satin slip, and body, and over-skirt of silver tulle wave upon wave of silver tulle fell round her, looped with chains of silver daisies.

The bodices had silver daisies all round the berth; there was a wreath of silver daisies for her hair, white silk stockings, and lovely satin slippers, long white gloves, a white and silver fan, and a pearl neck-lace.

All these articles came out of this wonderful box, and were put upon Pauline—oh, happy Pauline—whilst her aunt sat by and tapped her cane, and gave imperious directions and approval.

"How lovely, how exquisite," Pauline exclaimed, rapturously. "I never saw anything so beautiful."

"Yes, my dear, it's French, it was made for you by Worth, and only came this morning. I've long intended to act the part of the fairy god-mother and to take you away, my little Cinderella, from your sisters. I wish to see their faces when they meet you to-night. I like a bit of comedy in real life—I like a sensation."

"I am greatly afraid they will be very angry," she faltered, with a sense of terrible misgiving. "Perhaps they will send me home," her heart sinking at the not improbable prospect.

"No, no, my dear, no fear of that," returns her aunt, decisively. "I am staying with Lady Farrington, Sir Philip Curzon's sister, and I would take you back with me to-night. I am obliged to go to London on business to-morrow, but I will return in the autumn and take you to live with me altogether. I cannot now, I am not my own mistress," she said, this almost in a whisper.

She not her own mistress! This imperious looking old princess! It was incredible. Pauline's face reflected her doubts.

"Your sisters are paupers—and wicked paupers," she continued vehemently, tapping the ground with her cane. "But I must leave you here for the present—it's safer," as if speaking to herself. "However, you shall have money, plenty of money; an ample stock of dresses are on their way, and a pony carriage, and groom, and maid. Your dark days, my child, are at an end, and I shall introduce you to many powerful friends, who will see that you no longer sit at home in the chimney corner—*ma petite Cendrillon* enacting the role of poor relation. My bankers in town will keep you supplied with money—money for your own use, my child, not theirs. And now, you are dressed, and it's time we were going. Is there any glass in which you can see yourself from head to foot? You are transformed!"

There was one in the drawing-room, and here Pauline beheld her reflection by the light of two candles. She was quite awed—she could not speak.

Here was, indeed, an extraordinary transformation; she looked like a young fairy princess. Her feelings were too mixed for words, she could only gaze in silence—stupefied silence.

She was then wrapped in a soft Indian mantle,

and handed into the carriage after her aunt, feeling as if she were in a dream—a delicious dream—and keenly dreading the awakening!

Therese and the box had mysteriously disappeared, and her aunt and she were *tête-à-tête* in the carriage alone.

"You are like your mother, Pauline," she said, at last. "Like her, with the beauty of your aunt, Nathalie. There's no harm in your knowing you are pretty; you would soon hear it, and you did not make yourself. I hope your beauty will not prove as fatal to you as hers did to her."

"Who was my aunt Nathalie? I never heard of her," she asked eagerly.

"Your mother's only sister."

"Tell me something about my mother," she urged; "no one speaks of her, no one ever names her—who was she?"

"My niece, my niece. You will hear her story time enough," returned the old lady querulously. "I once declared I would never hear her name again, but that's gone by; age and time soften one wonderfully. I am not sure that they do not make us do foolish things. If I thought that you would be another serpent that I was to nourish in my bosom, I would fling you forth on the hard stones out there, and leave you to go in rags and beggary."

Her vehemence quite frightened Pauline, who trembled visibly as she sat beside her in all her finery, and the big bouquet in her hand shook perceptibly.

"Nay, never tremble, girl, you have but to be meek and obedient, and that's all I ask. Here we are at the door," as they drew up amid a blaze of light, and stepped out on the carpeted steps, Pauline walking timidly behind her aunt, feeling half frightened and half elated.

It was all so new to her; the lights, the immense crowd, the brilliant dresses and uniforms, the fountains, ferns, palms, and wonderful decorations, and the inspiring sound of the band!

One waltz had just been danced as they entered, and as Pauline moved up the room in the train of her fairy godmother, she felt that many, many eyes were on them both, but most on her.

"Was she so very remarkable looking or was it her dress?" she asked herself, anxiously. "Did she look as if she had never been into society before?"

She cast down her eyes and felt her face getting flushed, and her heart was beating fast in the bird-eye view she had taken. She had not seen her sisters. Now they were beside the hostess, a handsome, portly lady, one blaze of diamonds, who was very gracious to the old princess, and more than gracious to her niece. Perhaps her evident trepidation touched her.

"Her first dance. My niece, Miss Pauline Rivers, properly speaking, the Countess Pauline Dormanoff."

"Oh, indeed!" in a tone of polite amazement. "The Miss Rivers's little half sister, I always thought."

Here her Grace caught herself up sharp, and said nothing more about her, but smiled, and told Pauline she was charmed to see her, and presented her at once to a partner for the lancers just forming; but ere they had taken their places they were accosted by Sir Philip, who looked as if he positively could not believe the evidence of his eyes, and said—

"One dance, Miss Rivers, honour bright."

"Ferrars, my dear fellow, I'm awfully sorry for you. Perhaps Miss Rivers will give you one, instead."

And she did.

Her nervousness gradually wore away after the first figure, and she found herself laughing, and talking, and looking about, and criticising other people in the ballroom, and being told who was who, and enjoying herself very much.

"How on earth did you get here, after all! and that—" he asked, looking at her shiny dress.

"You may well ask," she returned, laughing. "I had just seen my sisters off in their fly, when my aunt drove up in a carriage with this, and a maid to dress me, and carried me off as you see."

"Just like Cinderella!"

"Just like Cinderella," she echoed, in a tone of complacent conviction.

"By-the-way, what do your sisters say to it?"

"I have not met them yet," returned the young lady, smiling, "and it does not matter what they say," with a reckless disregard of consequences.

"The meeting will be worth seeing. May I be there to see?" laughing. "By-the-way, who did you say was your aunt?"

"An old lady, a Russian, I believe, the Princess Dormanoff. I have only seen her once before," returned Pauline, candidly.

"Princess Dormanoff! I've often heard of her. She's an oddity."

"I believe so—I mean I dare say she is," murmured her niece.

"Did you never see her but once before?" he inquired; "and was this just a spontaneous eccentricity?"

Pauline then related their strange meeting a year previously, to which he listened with the deepest attention.

"And so you are half Russian, Cinderella?" he said, playfully. "Who would think it?"

"Not half; my grandfather was Russian, that's all," drawing herself up with assumed dignity. "Please to be respectful. Know that I am the Countess Pauline Dormanoff," looking at him mischievously from under her long lashes.

"Countess Pauline," with mock gravity. "I am your most humble servant," with a low bow.

"How long have you been a countess?"

"To my own knowledge about two hours," she returned, promptly. "but I suppose, in reality, ever since I was born."

"This will be another shock for your sisters, when the sublime fact dawns upon their minds. May an unworthy mere baronet presume to ask for three more dances, or as many as your ladyship will deign to give me?"

"I'll give you three with pleasure," she replied, "but I won't dance with you at all if you talk to me in that foolish way; it's worse than calling me Cinderella," taking his arm up to the refreshment buffet.

"Then I'll call you Cinderella," he said, boldly. "And, Cinderella, are not those your sisters benched among the dowagers opposite, and looking as cross as two sticks. They don't seem to know you. Shall we go over and introduce ourselves?"

"No—no, not on any account," she cried, nervously; but they had already seen her, had risen, were rapidly approaching, amazement and horror in their eyes and gait.

"Pauline!" they cried, in one breath, as they met in a doorway. "What does this mean? How did you come here?" looking her up and down with eyes of incredulous envy and indignation.

"My aunt called for me and brought me most unexpectedly."

"Your aunt! What aunt, pray?" contemptuously. "What do you mean?"

"The Princess Dormanoff, my grand aunt. If you wish, I will introduce you to her when I have had some tea. We must pass on now, please, as we are blocking up the doorway."

"By George! that was splendid. I'll never get over it," said Sir Philip, helping her to cream and sugar. "I thought your eldest sister was going to have a seizure of apoplexy, and your youngest one's eyes were glued to your frock, and no wonder. It's a very pretty one, the prettiest in the room. How glibly you talked of your aunt, the Princess Dormanoff. I'm afraid you are not so timid and contrived as you would like us to think."

This she eagerly disclaimed at once, and protested and argued to his great amusement. Afterwards she brought up and introduced her two sisters to her aunt, who gave them a very icy reception, and then danced away merrily the rest of the evening, danced the very soles off her shoes, and enjoyed herself even beyond her wildest anticipations.

She danced with Sir Philip four times, and had various other excellent partners, and saw many admiring eyes following her as she danced,

and heard many flattering whispers, and saw her sisters' perpetual stony stare. This gave a keener edge to her triumph. She was no longer "Cinderella"—a household slavey. She was the Countess Pauline—the belle of the ball.

## CHAPTER XL

PROBABLY Pauline's inexperienced head was rather turned by the sensation she created at the Duchesse's ball, and, indeed it was no wonder.

She was like a plant that had been kept in a cellar suddenly being brought out into a full blaze of sunshine among a brilliant assemblage of other flowers.

Could she be the same girl, she asked herself, who that very evening had been doing her sisters' hair and lacing their dresses, like any paid Abigail? and now she was standing in the same set with royalty, with an Earl for her partner, pearls on her neck, a French costume on her back—the cynosure of half the eyes in the room!

Her aunt presented her to many of her friends. She was no longer unknown. Names she had heard loudly vaunted by her sisters now became realities.

She was noticed by the great ones of the land—not with patronising indifference, but with kind interest. This was partly due to her aunt who was evidently a person of some note, and partly to her youth and pretty face and pretty dress; besides, was she not the Countess Pauline, one of themselves?

The ball was carried on till daylight, but her aunt took her reluctant niece home long before that hour and deposited herself safely at her own hall-door in the moonlight.

She stepped out on the granite steps, and stood there as her fairy godmother drove away; then she pinched her arm when the carriage had rolled out of sight, and asked herself,—

"Was it not all a dream? Was she actually the same shabby girl the Princess had found on those steps just five hours previously?"

No! She shook out her satin skirt, and looked down at her worn satin slippers, and put her hand up to her throat and felt her pearl necklaces. No, she was not!

She had seen the great world at last. She could never go back to what she was that very afternoon, and never be the same again.

She could hardly sleep, her mind was in such a tumult. It was actually too full. She had too many things to think of, and had enough material for thought to last her a life-time—all her partners, all the new and kind faces who had beamed on her; but she thought of no one as much as Sir Philip.

She gave him far more than his proper share of attention in her busy little brain. She admitted to herself that she liked him far the best.

How easy it was to get on with him, and yet how clever he was! He looked it, although he only talked nonsense, it must be confessed!

But her other partners had praised him, and said he was a wonderful orator, quite the rising man of his party, and that already his counsels and views carried great weight.

He was a diplomatist of the first order, and had already carried out two or three delicate and difficult negotiations with great success.

"You see," said one of her partners, a little lord, with vacuous blue eyes and a fair, pointed beard, "Curzon is such a cool, self-possessed fellow; he never loses his head—at any rate with men," he added to himself, as by a happy after-thought. "He is a great society man, too; but he does not care for the country, nor hunting amusements, or country people. He likes town and the Continent. He says the bucolic element in men and women bores him too frightfully."

If he did not care for country people why was he so civil to her? Pauline asked herself. Why did he dance with her four times, take her to supper, sit out with her, put her in the carriage beside her aunt, and press her hand at parting?

This was the conundrum she asked herself over and over again, and when the morning sun was

streaming into the room she fell asleep with it still unanswered.

She did not see her sisters when she came downstairs. She was not sent for as usual to help with their toilets; indeed, it was her duty to wait on them without being called for.

But she felt that things "were not what they were" since the preceding evening. She was no longer the daughter of a mysterious, low born nobody. She was the Countess Pauline in her mother's right, and it would not become the Countess Pauline to do hair, put on shoes and stockings for her two half-sisters, considering what half-sisters they were.

She shrank from meeting them, and did not feel elated, and did not intend to crow over them so to speak, and avenge herself of a hundred thousand slights—which may seem strange.

She swallowed a hasty breakfast, and taking up her sunburnt old straw hat (she was no fairy's protégée this morning; she had gone back to her rags), went out for a long ramble in the wilderness called grounds, and remained roaming about for hours, walking in a kind of waking and delicious dream.

But at length the pangs of hunger warned her that it was time to turn her steps homewards, and satisfy her healthy young appetite.

As she pushed her way through a thickly overgrown path another rustling (not caused by herself) made her stop and look quickly round.

The instant she did so the noise ceased. She then went on a little further, fancying that it might be some large dog that had strayed into the woods, for there were no keepers now to have an eye on such intruders, and then something she could not account for compelled her to look back, and she saw creeping out into the path on hands and knees, and among the bushes, a man.

The stealth of his attitude, which bore resemblance to the crawl of a reptile, frightened her more than the man himself, and, without pausing for another glance, she fled away back towards the more frequented part of the pleasure-ground as fast as her nimble feet could carry her.

He had not seen her, for his head was in the opposite direction; but who was he? Who was he waiting for? What wicked errand had brought him into the wood? Was he hiding—was he lying in wait?

Pauline could not answer any of those questions and would not have known him if she saw him again.

He had black hair, and wore a soft, much-worn felt hat. That was all she noticed.

"Would it be well to tell her sisters of her adventure or not?" she asked herself with a beating heart.

But the man in the wood was quickly put out of her head when she reached the house, and saw her aunt's carriage at the door. She was paying a visit to her niece's sisters. A state visit.

"She had been with them for half-an-hour already," so Phoebe whispered to Pauline, with bated breath—Phoebe, who now, as Pauline took off her hat and smoothed down her ruffled hair, accorded her a much larger share of respect than formerly.

They were all in the drawing-room when the young lady walked in.

Her aunt was seated in a high arm chair, with a footstool at her feet, her hands on either arm of the chair, her look and manner that of a judge delivering sentence and dispensing justice, and her sisters had the appearance of two culprits in the dock.

Pauline's entrance was the signal for her to rise and embrace her in the Continental fashion, patting her on the cheek, and saying,—

"And how are you this morning, my little Cinderella? I have been telling your kind sisters of the arrangements I am making for you. You are to live like a lady; I shall make a proper allowance, and this house will be kept up in a more suitable style while you live in it. You will go into society, have a maid, a man-servant, and pony-carriage for your own use, and your mother's diamonds will be restored to you within ten days," darting a glance of warning and menace at Matilda as she spoke that seemed to shrivel her up in her chair.

"And now, my love, I am going. Business of importance calls me to London to-morrow morning, and I have many arrangements to make before I start; so, good-bye," once more embracing her. "You may give me your arm to the carriage," she added, and with a magnificent bow to the elder sisters she hobbled out of the room, and was soon trotting down the avenue, and out of sight.

Pauline found that things began to mend immediately.

She was promoted to one of the best bedrooms the same day; her boxes of new dresses arrived, too, and also her maid.

Gardenera came to do up the place, painters to paint the doors and windows, an upholsterer sent in some chintz hangings and carpets.

All this was done under the eye of an overseer—a foreigner—an employé of the Princess's, and within a very short time Mount Rivers was a different-looking place.

It was transformed as if by magic, for many hands make light work. The improvements were all carried out in a week or ten days.

Visitors began to call with marvellous rapidity; invitations were showered in.

Mount Rivers had made quite a new social departure. It was mooted about that Pauline had come in for an enormous fortune, and should be cultivated.

Lady Farrington was one of the first callers, a pretty, bright, vivacious little woman, who eyed Pauline keenly as she talked about the weather and the roses; but not half so keenly as her companion, a pale-eyed, orange-haired blonde, who gazed at her with a stare that a basilisk might have envied, and who never opened her lips—not once!

She was a Frenchwoman, a widow, immensely wealthy, a Madame Bert; antecedents unknown.

Why did she eye the young Countess with such a malignant, searching, and contemptuous gaze?

They also had a visit from Sir Philip himself.

He came and laid himself out wholly to please her elder sisters. Oh, crafty Sir Philip! scarcely addressing himself to Pauline (except by looks).

The house was quite spick and span when he called, and ready to receive everybody.

A smart man-servant opened the door; the drawing-room looked charming, full of flowers, old-fashioned furniture, pretty new hangings, and soft new carpets and rugs—no longer the faded, shabby-looking apartment it had been of late years.

The elder sisters were all smiles, of course, and received the civilities of the parti of the neighbourhood with effusive and delighted surprise.

Could it be possible, Carry asked herself, that he was coming to see her?

Without doubt this was in her mind, as Pauline watched her casting her eyes up and down, and constantly displaying her hands, which were small and white, and one of her best points, and beaming and bridling, and, in her younger sister's opinion, making herself look extremely ridiculous.

They (the elders) eagerly accepted an invitation to drive on Sir Philip's coach the following afternoon; and, sure enough, the next day his beautiful team, well known in the Row in London and at the meets of the Coaching Club at the Magazine, four dark Browns, perfect, matchless in size and action.

Not a little to Matilda's and Carry's surprise Pauline was invited to take the box seat, and they were established behind.

Never had she been on so lofty a perch before, never driven at such a pace. It was delightful!

Her sisters were exceedingly nervous, and did not enjoy themselves at all, giving little suppressed exclamations and screams as they turned a sharp corner or thundered down a hill, and they had not the pleasant conversation of Sir Philip, as she had, to modify the situation.

He found time to talk to her a good deal, in spite of his four vivacious horses who required

constant attention, and he told her that his sister, Lady Farrington, was going to ask her on a visit.

"Would she go?"

"I shall be very happy, indeed," she answered, most thankfully.

"She is going to write, I know, and she will come for you herself," he returned. "I want to see a great deal of you. You know I'm nearly always at her house now."

To this observation Pauline made no reply, beyond becoming extremely red.

"Do you like me, Cinderella?" he asked, audaciously.

"Like you! Oh, yes, I like you," she returned with much embarrassment.

"And will you come out driving with me often when you are staying with my sister?"

"I don't know. I really must leave that to her," she replied, bashfully. "And here we are! How quickly time has gone," she added, naively, as they dashed through the entrance-gate once more.

"I'm glad you think so. We've made a round of about fifteen miles, and it seems to me we have only been five minutes, and we are actually back again at the hall-door. I wish we had it all to commence over again," he whispered, as he helped her carefully down, and then assisted her relations to alight; and, after lingering for nearly half-an-hour, in spite of his horses' visible impatience, he reluctantly drove away at last.

The same evening Pauline received a very friendly note from Lady Farrington, asking her to pay her a visit in the most pressing terms.

"Do come," she said. "We shall be so delighted to have you, and to become better acquainted. If you answer in the affirmative I shall drive over for you on Thursday afternoon, about three o'clock."

Pauline's sisters were by no means too well pleased that their names were left out of the invitation, and exchanged whispered remarks, and shrugs, and significant glances, and audibly wondered how Pauline could have so little pride as to go to a house to which her nearest relations were not asked.

But, as her nearest relations had never let this stand in their way when they had accepted invitations in which her name was omitted, she boldly said "Yes," although it was further hinted to her that it was now that she was "somebody" that she was noticed and not for her intrinsic value.

The two amiable ladies hated their step-sister with a more active dislike than ever, though they were obliged to keep the open manifestation of it for each other. Only envy is a strong incentive to a good, warranted family hate.

Two days later Lady Farrington had taken Pauline away in her lovely little Victoria, with its high-stepping cobs; and as she was whirled from the door she kissed her hand repeatedly to her two sisters, whom she left standing on the steps, looking the embodiment of two thunder-clouds, their eyes darting forked lightning.

Farrington Court was a place built in the Italian style, with white stuccoed front and verandah and pillared portico, and as luxurious as it was possible for any country house to be where the master possessed riches and the mistress taste.

They were in time for five o'clock tea, and had it in the boudoir before removing their hats.

The boudoir was hung with rose-coloured satin; the carpet was pale gray; the furniture black-and-gold, and many lovely ornaments were scattered about, as if of no value.

It was not empty as they entered. The woman with the orange-coloured hair was lounging in a chair, dressed in a black satin tea gown, half-smothered in priceless lace, with a French novel between her languid fingers, and a sneer on her lips.

She gave Pauline a very cool shake of the hand, and measured her from head to foot, as she exclaimed in an exhausted voice that, "They were earlier than she expected, and that the afternoon had not been dull," in answer to her hostess's eager apologies.

"Oh no, the time passed pleasantly enough," she drawled. "Your brother has been sitting here, and I've been singing to him."

"Oh, indeed! Well, I'm very glad to hear it. Here's tea at last. Valerie, would you mind making it. I'm half dead," said Lady Farrington. "The heat this afternoon is positively quite tropical. You were wise to stay at home!"

Lady Farrington and Madame Bert were evidently most intimate bosom friends. Pauline was the odd one out, for though Lady Farrington was very pleasant to her she could see that her visit was anything but welcome to the other; that she had taken a most violent aversion to her, and was at no pains to conceal the fact.

"Do you take sugar, Miss Rivers?" she drawled, with the tongue poised in her fingers; "or are you sweet enough?"

"Sugar, if you please," not deigning to notice her rude question, and receiving her cup from her hands, and a look accompanying it that said, "I wish to Heaven it was poison."

Pauline had never done anything to her, never spoken to her, and was aware that she did not deserve such looks nor such sneers, and was resolved that she would not submit to them tamely.

Her eyes probably said as much as she looked full into Madame Bert's pale, greenish-grey ones, as they met hers point-blank, and told her that she would meet her on her own grounds. It should be war to the knife! For what reason, Pauline if put on her oath, could not have sworn. The cool contemptuous looks of the other, and her cynical smiles made her young blood all aflame, and she picked up the gauntlet without hesitation, and for a woman's reason, which is as intangible as air.

(To be continued.)

THE potato, so long a staple food, has developed almost innumerable varieties. There are nineteen varieties of the white potato in America, eighteen in Germany, twenty-six in Great Britain, and thirty-two in France.

BEDROOMS OF THE ORIENT.—The bedrooms of the Orient are far different from those of Christendom. Fully half the women of the world sleep upon the floor or the ground, and even the richest of the ladies of Asia have never known the luxury of hair mattresses and spring beds. Most of these Mongolian beauties don't know what a feather bed means, and there is in most museums a Japanese pillow, consisting of a piece of wood about the size of a loaf of bread with a piece of soft paper tied on the top of it, and so made that it will just fit into Yum Yum's neck and prop her head off the floor. The Japanese girl never needs to shake up her pillow, and it is her neck rather than her head that lies upon it. The same kind of pillows are used in China and Siam, and as to the average woman of Hindostan, she does not know what a pillow means. You could buy her whole wardrobe for four shillings, and she sleeps on the floor, while her husband cuddles himself up in spoon-fashion on the bed. The Korean pillow is about eight inches wide and a foot long. I have seen some that were two feet long. They are as hard as though they were flatirons wrapped in cloth, and there is nothing comfortable about them. The Egyptians use large pillows, and the beauties of the harem sleep on big divans, which are often covered with Turkish rugs. The richest woman in China, whose husband died worth ten million dollars, has a bed fully six feet square. It is made of teak wood, and it is covered with ropes instead of a mattress. The old lady lies on canvas stretched tightly over this, and she does not know what springs are. The Japanese sleep on the floor. They have thick quilts, which they spread on the floor at night, and which they pack away in cupboards in the daytime, and these constitute the bed. The Burmese also sleep on the floor, but they usually spread down mats instead of quilts, and the pillows are of bamboo. The same discomfort of sleeping arrangements prevails all over the East, and there is not a washstand in any Asiatic bedroom.

## A MYSTERIOUS HOUSEHOLD.

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(Continued from page 345.)

When he heard of the will that was in existence, he decided on leaving the country with his wife, and taking with him all the money he could get—no inconsiderable sum, for the old man, with the true miser's instinct, refused to place his gold in the bank, or in securities, preferring to keep it in his own actual possession.

It had been arranged that Silas should travel to London on some business connected with the farm, but before he went his father asked him to go to the octagon-room, and obtain from Elfrida the revolver which he himself had given her, but which, under present circumstances, he decided had better not remain in her possession.

This the younger man did, though not without difficulty, and old Surtees took it, after which Silas proceeded to the station, where he met his wife and they both travelled up to London together.

On their arrival he just stayed to instal her in some apartments, and then bought himself a disguise in which he returned to the Red Lodge, arriving there at midnight.

He was not expected and Surtees had gone to bed, but Silas let himself in through the small side door that Elfrida had once pointed out to Herbert, and proceeded at once to the study, where the gold was secreted in a hiding-place that the old man himself had made in the antique-carved chimney-piece, and which was well calculated to defy detection.

Silas would never have suspected its existence, had he not watched his father's operations the preceding night, but having done so, it was easy enough to find it again, and he was in the very act of transferring the gold from the cash-box he had broken open, to the leather bag with which he had provided himself, when there appeared in the study no less a person than the miser himself.

He had apparently heard some noise for which he could not account, and had come down, armed with Elfrida's revolver.

His surprise and horror when he recognised his son may be imagined, but Silas, rendered desperate by his discovery, would not forego his purpose, and tried to wrest the revolver from the old man's grasp.

In the struggle it went off, and Surtees fell, mortally wounded.

When he saw his father lying dying at his feet, some sort of remorse touched the wretched man, and under its influence he went to the octagon-room and fetched Elfrida—who had acquired a slight knowledge of surgery once when he had been ill, and she had nursed him.

Elfrida, who was awaiting the appearance of her lover, came at once, but it only required a moment's inspection to prove to her that her guardian was beyond all human help, and this she told Silas, who thereupon had wrung from her a promise not to betray the share he had had in his father's death.

Experience had taught him that the girl's word, once given, might be utterly depended on, and he had left the house taking with him the gold, and walking over to a station some ten miles distant, whence he travelled up to London, and left his money with his wife.

He had hesitated whether he should return to the Red Lodge, but had finally decided to do so, in order to allay any suspicion that his absence might create.

Moreover, he imagined rightly that his supposed presence in London on the night of the murder, would prevent his being connected with it, and he was also anxious to obtain some money that was owing him before he finally left England for Buenos Ayres.

The same night that he signed the confession he died.

Later on Herbert took his young wife away with him to the sunny shores of the Mediterranean, to spend the honeymoon, which he fondly told her, would only end with his life.

[THE END.]

## FACETIE.

MAUDE: "Our engagement is a secret." Lena: "So everybody tells me."

HUSBAND (very late from the club): "Hum! I told you not to sit up for me." Wife (sweetly): "I didn't. I got up to see the sun rise."

PATIENT: "Oh, doctor, I feel that I am almost at death's door!" Doctor (cheerfully): "Oh, don't fear! We'll pull you through."

FRIEND: "Your two sopranos appear to be very good friends." Manager: "Yes, each thinks the other can't sing."

HUSBAND: "Does that new novel turn out happily?" Wife: "It doesn't say. It only says they were married."

"You wouldn't think a woman of seventy-five could dance a minuet." "I don't know. The women of seventy-six danced it continually."

HE: "Pshaw! I could kiss you right under your mother's nose." SHE: "I should very much prefer, Harry dear, that you kiss me under my own."

EDITH: "My dressmaker—Madame Mantalini—must be losing all her business." Helen: "Why?" Edith: "She sent my new dress home the day it was promised."

RETROSPECTIVE—Edith: "I thought you and Mabel were fast friends." Nellie: "We used to be." "And you are not now?" "No." "What was his name?"

JOHNNIE: "Mamma, this book says knowledge is power." Mamma: "And it is, my child." Johnnie: "No, mamma, it isn't. I know there is pie in the pantry, but I can't get it."

THE RICH UNCLE (to his physician): "There is hope for me, then?" Physician: "I think so." The Rich Uncle: "Well, please break it gently to my poor nephew."

DOCTOR: "Did you apply a mustard plaster to your spine?" Patient: "Yes." Doctor: "Didn't you find it a great help?" Patient: "No; I felt that it was a great drawback."

LADY VISITOR: "That new girl of yours seems very nice and quiet." MISTRESS OF THE HOUSE: "Yes—she's very quiet. She doesn't even disturb the dust when she's cleaning up a room."

GLOOMY MAN: "Who is the fool who wrote 'I would Not Die in Spring-Time!'" Wife: "Fool!" Gloomy Man: "Yes. Spring-time is just the season to die. Escape the spring house-cleaning, you know."

THE TOWN GIRL (staying at a Devonshire farmhouse): "Oh, dear; what a dear little animal!" The Farmer: "Yes, miss. It's a yearling." The Town Girl (with interest): "Indeed! And—er—how old is it?"

FATHER: "Yes, I admit that your lover has a good income, but he has very expensive tastes—very." Daughter: "You amaze me: What does he ever want that is so very expensive?" "Well, you, for one thing."

CRABBED OLD MAID (sarcastically): "I don't suppose there is another baby like that in the world." Young Mother: "Oh, yes, there is! I left the other one of the twins at home with mother."

CUSTOMER: "You advertise trousers made while you wait; but I've been waiting three hours, and you don't seem to have 'em ready yet." Tailor: "You'd prob'ly find it more comfortable to wait at home; they'll be ready day after to-morrow."

BREACH OF PROMISE CASE.—Judge (indignantly): "You promised this woman to marry her, and now you want to back out of it." "Your honour," replied the defendant, "marriage is a lottery, and by the laws of this country, lotteries are prohibited."

CHOLLY: "Young Goslin lost £50 at Monte Carlo, and has felt awfully proud about it ever since." Moody: "Why?" Cholly: "A certain royal prince won about £1,500 that day, and Goslin thinks the prince has got some of his money."

AN invalid, after returning from a Southern trip, said to a friend, "Oh, shure, an' it's done me a wurruld o' good, goin' away. I've come back another man altogether. In fact, I'm quite meself again."

"Yes, madam, I remember very well your buying a stamp." "Well, I put it on a very important letter and mailed it. It has not been received. I want you to understand that I shall buy my stamps elsewhere if this occurs again."

MR. E. CONOMIE: "Did you write to that man who advertises to show people how to make desserts without milk, and have them richer?" Mrs. E. Conomie: "Yes, and sent him the money." "What did he reply?" "Use cream."

"WHAT makes them call that particular style of verse 'blank'?" asks the girl who always wants to know something. "Because," replied the young man, "that's the condition in which it leaves your mind."

YOUNG WIFE: "Gracious! Look here, fellow, your dog has run off with a whole sponge cake I left outside to cool." Tramp: "Don't you fret, mum. That dog's stronger than he looks. He kin eat anything."

YOUNG MRS. SAPPY: "Oh, Adolphus, I can hear burglars downstairs!" Young Mr. Sappy: "Then, now we shall know if those spoons I bought are really silver. If they're silver they'll take them; and if they're not, they won't."

ACTOR: "What is the character of Sulphone's new play?" Critic: "There is a sleep-walking scene in the third act." "Like the one in 'Macbeth'?" "No; the audience gets up in its sleep and walks out."

A RECENT matrimonial advertisement runs:—"A lady, young, pretty, bright and poor, desires to make the acquaintance of a man with the opposite qualities, with a view to a happy marriage."

"Sir, will you allow me to shake hands with you, as that will create an impression that there is somebody here whom I know?" "Delighted, sir, I'm sure. I am in the same predicament as yourself."

"Don't you spend a great deal of your time in denying other people's intelligence?" "Yes," said the boaster: "I go around putting the dunce-cap on other people's heads." "Aren't you afraid you'll catch cold?" asked the other, quietly.

BURGLAR (rousing the sleeping head of the family): "Don't move, or I'll shoot! Whar's your money hid?" Head of the family (struck by a bright thought): "It's in the pocket of my wife's dress." Burglar: "That's all right. I'll just take the dress. Thanks!"

A CHEERFUL OUTLOOK.—Mrs. Youngwife (welcoming husband home): "Now, duckey, I've been cooking all day. I've made pie and cake and biscuits. Duckey (cheerfully): "Then 'Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die.'"

SHE: "I have just been reading about the seven ages of man. I wonder how Shakespeare would have described the ages of woman!" He: "There would be but two ages of woman." She: "How's that?" He: "Sweet seventeen and not yet thirty."

"We are going to have Mabel very highly educated," said a clever young matron, recently. "I don't want to be highly educated," came the unexpected voice of Mabel (a little tot of five) from another room; "I want to be just like you."

THE REV. BUBBERLY LOVE (explains to his favourite pupil): "Instinct, my boy, is a mysterious something which prompts a beast to some action, independent of any consideration on his part." "Our dog's got that, sir, but we calls it fleas."

UNCLE JOE (from the country): "This is a queer world." Londoner: "What makes you think so?" Uncle J.: "Well, a painter feller came down to my place last summer, and, while he was loafin' about, painted a picture of my dog. I heard afterwards that he sold it for £50, so I brought up the dog thinking I could git at least a cool £100 for him; but, hang it! I can't even give him away."

A HOTEL-KEEPER, when giving Christmas-boxes to his servants, told one of his porters (a smart Irishman) that he was the best man round the house, and, therefore, he should give him the most costly present. "Sure," said Pat, "I always mane to do my duty." "I believe you," replied his employer, "and, therefore, I shall make you a present of all you have stolen from me during the past year." "Thank yer honour," replied Pat, "and may all yer friends and acquaintances treat you the same."

A HANSOM was being driven along at a pretty smart pace when another cab, coming in the opposite direction, ran into it with just sufficient force to lodge the colliding horse's head on the back of the other cab horse. The expected burst of strong language did not take place, but, instead, the driver of the hansom that had been run into sat quite still, and, with withering politeness, observed to the other driver: "When your 'oss 'ave seen all 'e wants to see across my 'oss's back p'raps 'e'll get down; but, bless you, I ain't in a hurry."

AN eminent artist was one day showing some visitors round his studio, when they came to an unfinished picture on which the artist had just been working. After duly admiring it, they were about to take leave of the artist, when one of the party, a pompous little man, inadvertently brushed his arm against it. The artist, very much annoyed, said to him: "The picture is wet, sir. You've smudged it. Look, there's the colour on your sleeve." "Oh! never mind," said the pompous little man, graciously, "it's an old coat," and passed out with the others.

A COMMERCIAL traveller, dining at a country inn, ordered boiled chicken for his dinner. It was placed before him, and he tried in vain to make an incision with his knife and fork. "Turning to the girl who had waited on him, he said, 'I was here five years ago, and ordered a chicken for dinner.' 'Oh, yes,' answered the girl flippantly, 'I remember. It was I who waited on you.' 'How strange—how very strange!' remarked the man in a low, awestricken tone. 'Why is it strange?' inquired the girl. 'It's more than strange, it's wonderful—such a coincidence could hardly happen twice—same girl, same chicken!' and he looked reverently at the specimen before him, while the girl made a hasty retreat."

TOURIST: "How long will it take me to get from here to Peddlington?" Intelligent Rustic: "Pends on th' way ye go—the long er short way." Tourist: "Well, the short way; how long?" I. R.: "Pends on whether ye ride er walk." Tourist: "Oh, hang it! I'll drive, of course." I. R.: "Then it'll pend on how fast the horses be. It may take ye one time, an' it may take ye another. Horses differ so in speed." Tourist (desperately): "Well, when you drive there yourself, how long does it take you?" I. R.: "Ain't never driv it." Tourist: "And when you walk it, then?" I. R.: "Nerer thought to take count o' the time, but it's my notion o' things that maybe if you'd started about the time ye began talkin' to me about it, ye might possibly have been there by this ef ye'd travelled fast enough."

Two well-dressed gentlemen, on a sight-seeing tour, strolled in the vicinity of a handsome new structure. "Wonder what this is!" queried one, casting his eye about for a corner-stone. "Ah, there is an inscription on the wall. Latin. Funny place to put it. 'Post nobis.' Let's see. I've forgotten most of my Latin. What do you make out of it?" The other adjusted his eye-glasses critically surveyed the inscription, and returned, "Hum! 'Post' means 'after,' of course; but 'nobis' gets away with me. Nobis, nobis, no—I declare, I'll have to give it up. Let's inquire next door." Thereupon they sought out the intelligent custodian of the building, and put their question. "What does that there inscription mean?" the man repeated after them, in a pitying tone. "It means just exactly what it says, and five dollars' fine in the bargain if you go to posting any bills around this place." The sightseers who had forgotten their Latin retired, looking reproachfully at each other.

## SOCIETY.

THE Duke of York received the honorary degree of D.C.L. at the Cambridge University lately.

THE Queen has a wholesome dread of fire. Whenever she goes abroad she always has a couple of fire extinguishers sent out in advance, and fitted up in the house where she will reside.

THE marriage of Miss Rosa Hood and Mr. Evans of Forde Abbey is to take place at Cricket St. Thomas, on Tuesday the 31st, and Princess Beatrice and Prince Henry of Battenberg may possibly be present at the wedding.

THE German Emperor intends to leave Wilhelmshafen for Cuxva on the 30th; and when the Empress returns from Norway she is to join her children at Wilhelmshöhe, near Cassel, from which place she is to visit the Empress Frederick at Cronberg.

ROUTINE has always been a hobby of the Queen, whose own love of regularity and system was doubtless intensified by the associations of her married life, the lamented Prince Consort having been methodical to the last degree in the affairs both of public and private life.

THE Khedive has recently presented the Queen with a portrait of himself which has been hung in the private apartments at Windsor Castle. The Khedive is represented in a dark green uniform, with the cuffs and collar embroidered with gold, and wearing the star of the Order of St. Michael and St. George, and the star and green ribbon of the Medjidie.

THE Duke and Duchess of Coburg are going to St. Petersburg at the end of the month to attend the wedding of the Grand Duchess Xenie, which is to take place at the Summer Palace of Peterhof early in August. On returning from Russia they will settle at the beautiful chateau of Reinhardtsbrunn in the Thuringian Forest, where they are to receive a visit from the Prince of Wales towards the end of August, when there will be some grand hunting parties.

THE Grand Duke Michael Michaelovitch of Russia, whose brother will shortly be married to the Grand Duchess Xenie, has been out of the Czar's good books for some little time, ever since he contracted a morganatic marriage which much displeased his autocratic cousin. Report now has it that the offending couple are to be freely pardoned and allowed to live in Russia again, and that they will be present at the Grand Duchess Xenie's wedding.

THE Queen gave some enchanting robes to deck the infant prince, hand-embroidered; one of them of Irish lawn and fine Irish lace is like a cobweb for delicacy of texture with a beautiful design in the pattern. Then there is a white zibeline cloak and hood—two lovely warm garments, but they will hardly be required for use in the present weather; and then there is the hood presented by Her Majesty, with miniature Prince of Wales's plumes on it in pure white ostrich tips.

THE last time the Princess of Wales visited Ascot her Royal Highness ran up to Sheen one day to be with the Duchess of Fife during her illness, and history almost repeated itself this year, for messages were going to and fro between Coworth Park and White Lodge all the week long, and every preparation was made for a visit to the Duchess of York at a moment's notice, had it been necessary, and, as all the world now knows, the Princess did run up to Richmond on Saturday afternoon, and remained at White Lodge until the young Duchess had happily given birth to an infant son.

A BEAUTIFUL quilt was presented to the Duchess of York by the Committee and Associates of the Royal School of Art Needlework, in honour of the birth of the baby prince. It is a facsimile copy of the quilt on the State bed in the King's Room at Knole Park, which was worked for James I., and belongs now to Lord Sackville. It is of geranium-red satin, the design, lilies and roses conventionally treated, worked in gold and silver thread, the silver flowers being much raised and outlined with black silk, which gives a very rich effect.

## STATISTICS.

It is estimated that one of the largest stones in the Pyramids weighs fully eighty-eight tons.

It is estimated that a person will eat thirty-five pounds of butter per annum.

On an average there are 10,000 advertisements a week in the eleven London morning papers.

ELEPHANTS have been known to live 150 years.

HYDROPHOBIA is most frequent in Sweden, where 282 deaths in 1,000,000 annually occur from this cause.

DWARFS live much longer than giants, the latter usually having weak constitutions and soft and brittle bones.

IN no other country is the vine so productive as at the Cape. Six hundred gallons of wine have been obtained from 1,000 vines, and the general average yield is about 400 gallons per 1,000, or nearly ten times the yield the same number of vines give in French vineyards.

## GEMS.

THE most fascinating women are those who can most enrich the every-day moments of existence.

EVERYTHING that happens to us leaves some trace behind; everything contributes imperceptibly to make us what we are.

LIKE a beautiful flower full of colour, but without scent, are the fine but fruitless words of him who does not act accordingly.

A WISE man takes a step at a time; he establishes one foot before he takes up the other; and old place should not be forsaken recklessly.

EVERY one in the world can teach us something; and the greatest men have generally been the most eager learners, and have despised no source which might supply the want.

FREE WILL is not the liberty to do whatever one likes, but the power of doing whatever one sees ought to be done, even in the very face of otherwise overwhelming impulse. There lies freedom indeed.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

CHEESE CANAPEES.—With a large cake cutter, cut out circles of bread half an inch thick; cut them again so as to make crescent-shaped pieces. Fry in butter to a light brown, grate some cheese and put one teaspoonful on each piece of bread, a little pepper and salt, and brown quickly in a hot oven, and serve at once.

SEASONABLE DESSERTS.—Lady fingers, strawberries and whipped cream make a good dessert for this month. A mould should be lined with lady fingers slit in two and moistened with strawberry juice. Strawberries and whipped cream in alternate layers should fill it up, and the whole put on ice and served very cold.

CARDINAL SALAD.—This very handsome salad may be made by adding beet juice or lobster coral to a plain mayonnaise dressing. The latter, of course, is to be served with a lobster salad. Arrange lettuce, cress, sliced beets, and small radishes in a salad bowl; garnish with hard boiled eggs, and pour a cardinal mayonnaise over all.

BAKED BANANAS.—Select perfect but not overripe fruit, wash it thoroughly, and cut off the ends. Place in a shallow dish, an earthen one is preferable, and bake in a moderate oven for an hour. When it is done the fruit will be thoroughly soft, and most of the juice will be retained within the skins. If baked too long, or in too hot an oven, the juices will be evaporated, and much of the flavour will be lost. Serve hot with or without cream.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

THE song of the nightingale can be heard a mile distant.

PLANTS grow faster between 4 and 6 a.m. than at any other time during the day.

THE thinnest, and at the same time one of the toughest, leathers tanned is a frog's skin.

THE cost of a London four-wheeled cab is from £70 to £80, that of a hansom about £70.

AT Corunna, Spain, is the oldest lighthouse in the world. It was built nearly eighteen hundred years ago.

THE remains of a Roman water-gate have been unearthed at Nineveh. There are two openings of thirteen feet span.

A BRANCH always causes a knot in the tree, and any obstruction of the flow of sap will usually cause a knot also.

FEMALE employes in many of the German manufactories are not permitted to wear corsets during working hours.

PEOPLE should never go in the early morning to get boots and shoes fitted. In the latter part of the day the feet are at their maximum size.

THE Dyak head-hunting has a religious origin. The Dyak believes that every person he kills in this world will be his slave in the next.

THERE are more Germans in London than foreigners of any other one nationality. Russians come next, Frenchmen third and Americans fourth.

BEEs are said to have such an antipathy to dark-coloured objects that black chickens have been stung to death, while white ones of the same brood were left untouched.

THE animal which most nearly resembles a plant is probably *hymenopus bicoloris*, an insect found in India, which bears an extraordinary likeness to the flower of an orchid.

THERE is now playing in Paris a Russian horn band, each horn being capable of producing a single note only. So perfect is the training that the band produces the effect of one equipped with ordinary instruments, and even running scales with the precision of a violin.

THE Blue Grotto, on the Island of Capri, in the Bay of Naples, is absolutely unrivalled for the vivid splendour of its colours. Owing to the peculiar nature of the refraction of the sunlight on the waters, wall, roof, and sea are tinged a beautiful ultramarine, which shades into a deep violet in the further recesses of the cavern.

THE thrift and economy of French methods have found a use for old leather. This heretofore almost useless article is put into vats, boiled and, being subjected to hydraulic pressure, yields a greasy liquid, that, after treatment with sulphuric acid, is run off into barrels to cool. After passing through various purifying processes, it is fit for the uses to which low grades of oil are put.

A FRENCH review says that the correct measure of the height of any individual may be ascertained by taking the distance from tip to tip of the fingers when the arms are extended. Artists consider that in an approximately perfect figure the total length of the body is seven times the length of the head. The ear and the nose are of equal length, and the forehead and the nose are nearly so.

AN immense number of people sleep on the left side, and this is the most common cause of the unpleasant taste in the mouth in the morning which is generally attributed to dyspepsia. If a meal has been taken within three or four hours of going to bed, to sleep on the left side is to give the stomach a task which is difficult in the extreme to perform. The student of anatomy knows that all food leaves the stomach on the right side, and hence sleeping on the left side soon after eating involves a sort of pumping operation which is anything but conducive to sound repose. The action of the heart is also interfered with considerably, and the lungs are unduly compressed. It is probable that lying on the back is the most natural position, but few men can rest easily so, and hence it is best to cultivate the habit of sleeping on the right side.

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A. B. C.—June 28th, 1838.  
 R. B.—No license is needed for the sale of tea.  
 E. J. C.—See answer to J. L. in our last issue.  
 OLD READER.—It depends upon circumstances.  
 CONSTANT READER.—There is no standard price.  
 IGNORAMUS.—Lieutenant is pronounced "let-tenant."  
 RANDAL.—We should not think of advising in such a case.  
 K. B.—We cannot suggest what would remove the smell.  
 ANXIOUS.—She would have no claim upon your husband.  
 INQUIRER.—Opinions are never given on legal documents.  
 F. J.—You had better get the information from the makers.  
 HECTOR.—We never undertake to answer questions privately.  
 REVE.—Purpoles occasionally ascend rivers on the Atlantic coast.  
 AMBITIOUS ONE.—It is impossible for us to say what you are fit for.  
 IN DEPAIR.—The best you can do is to go to a respectable lawyer.  
 Q. T.—We do not publish the addresses of private firms in this page.  
 G. F.—We strongly advise you to obtain legal assistance from the outset.  
 DEAR.—Bolt the clothes-line, and it will not kink as new rope is apt to do.  
 MARY G.—A mother is not liable for debts contracted by her son under age.  
 B. B.—A teaspoonful of alum will make clear, if it is said, four gallons of water.  
 JACK.—Britain has by far the strongest navy, France comes next, and Italy third.  
 G. T.—The expression quoted is equivalent to the remark "going to the dogs."  
 DICKENSIAN.—The copyrights on about one-half of Dickens's works have run out.  
 REGULAR READER.—It is not lawful for a man to marry his deceased wife's sister.  
 BALD-PATE.—Try paraffin applied as an oil and well rubbed in twice a week at night.  
 WARRIOR.—Abu Klee, January 17th, 1885, was the first battle of the second campaign.  
 MILLICENT.—Impossible to recover possession of articles which one has presented to another.  
 MISERABLE.—An illegitimate child is not under any circumstances liable in aliment to its mother.  
 ANXIOUS ONE.—We are really not in a position to advise, having no knowledge of the circumstances.  
 HARRY.—Fruit cannot stand freezing, because it ruptures the cells of the fruit, and decay takes place.  
 NOT BROWN MAID.—Dark brown is the prevailing colour of the hair of the people of English nationality.  
 J. L. N.—Such conduct on the part of the man is both cruel and heartless. He can be made to support those children under sixteen years of age.  
 NIAIDA.—We know of no immediate remedy, and can only advise you to avoid all farinaceous food and take plenty of exercise.  
 ELEPHANTINE.—An elephant may weigh from three to four tons; we do not know what is the heaviest weight recorded.  
 FLOER.—If you can show that the money was obtained from you by a false pretence you may take proceedings in the police court.  
 DOLLY.—To make lemon syrup, to one pint of lemon juice, add one and a half pounds of sugar; boil it to a syrup, and keep it in bottles for use.  
 A. G. D.—A copy of the last report can no doubt be obtained on application to the secretary, 13a, St. Helens-place, London, E.C.  
 X. Y. Z.—You could undoubtedly find many such places if you would advertise in some paper that reaches country readers.  
 CHAS.—When a programme is issued the name of the author and the source from whence the poem is obtained should be given.  
 HAGAR.—As a rule, it is well to let the hair complained of alone, for, if removed, it will be apt to come out again, and be thicker and coarser than ever.  
 TIM.—Write to Probate Registry, Somerset House, asking name of testator, and when and where he died, also asking to be informed of cost of copy of his will.  
 GRAYSON BELL.—Heather is by no means common in England, but it is found on the higher parts of Cumberland and Northumberland, also of Yorkshire and Wales.  
 T. S.—If the husband has not driven the wife from his home by persistent cruelty and neglect, she is not entitled to alimony as long as she refuses to return to him.

M. S.—Mix six ounces spirit of salt, and half ounce powdered salt of lemon; drop a little of this mixture on the stains and rub well with a cork until they disappear; then wash with cold water.

ROSS.—The information you require could not be obtained without personal investigation in all parts of the kingdom. Whitaker's almanack supplies some portion.

A. D.—"The Three Musketeers" is continued in "Twenty years After," "The Forty-five Guardsmen," and "Viscount de Bragelonne," by the same author, Dumas the elder.

CHESTY.—Sift through a fine sieve two parts soda, one pumice stone, and one finely powdered chalk. Mix into a paste with water, and rub well over the stains. Then wash with soap and water.

UNRELIABLE.—If you neglect to have the child vaccinated you can be summoned and fined, unless a medical man certifies that for reasons of health the operation may properly be deferred.

VIOLET.—Parsley is effectual in removing the odor of onions after a meal, but the green sprigs should be eaten as celery is, with the onions or with the potato salad, not left to be taken after dinner or supper.

HAIL.—The name of Sandwich Islands is English. When Captain Cook discovered the group in 1779, he christened them in honour of Lord Sandwich of the English admiralty.

JUNKO.—You must find or write to the individual who acts as shore steward to a company or line; he has the making of the appointments aboard; stewards and cooks do not assist in navigation.

TENANT.—All fruit trees, &c., belong to the landlord and cannot be removed by the tenant, even though he may have planted them. We advise you to see the landlord and come to some understanding with him if you particularly want the trees.

## "HE DIED FROM HOME."

"He died from home!" How many a heart  
Has been from dear ones called to part  
In this sad way; and never heard  
From dying lips the last faint word!

How many a soul has felt the shock,  
The bolt that splits the granite rock,  
The deadly sword that swift descends  
Nor spares the nearest, dearest friends!

He died from home! A stranger hand  
Responded to his least demand,  
And stranger faces, Heaven-sent,  
Above his couch in kindness bent.

Yet though he turned from side to side,  
And gazed through space both far and wide,  
He looked in vain for loving eyes—  
A mother's tears, a father's sighs.

He looked in vain for that dear wife  
Who long had shared his checkered life;  
The children, too, a happy band,  
The brightest, sweetest in the land!

"He died from home!" Oh! cruel fate  
To him who dies, and those who wait;  
To him who gains the heavenly door,  
And those who stand upon the shore.

M. A. K.

PANAY BLOSSOM.—1. Try powdered fuller's earth sprinkled on at night. 2. We could not say with any certainty without a fuller description of the stones. 3. Fluke signifies luck more than anything else, as when an inexperienced person accomplishes a difficult thing.

TRUE FRIEND.—She has a perfect right to find out all about the man she has promised to marry. If he has been passing himself off as a good young man while his habits and past life are disreputable, the sooner he is exposed the better.

SOLD.—To keep patent leather from cracking, it is said that it must be kept from extreme cold; also that a little oil rubbed in with the warm hand is good. As a rule, this sort of leather is bound to crack, do whatever one will.

WORK-A-DAY.—A skewer will be found to be of great assistance in sweeping a room. Nothing else can so thoroughly dig out deposits of dust from dusky corners. For still smaller recesses a bit of twisted wire that started life as a hairpin will be found equally effective.

IN DISTRESS.—The best way to fumigate a house is to close up all keyholes and crannies with paper or rags, take a shovelful of red hot coal from the fire, place it in the middle of room and lay a quantity of sulphur on the coals, go out at once, closing door after you; leave for an hour or more.

PERPLEXED.—"Cattle" is etymologically the same word as "chattel," and its primary meaning is personal property. Its chief modern significance is, of course, live stock; but it is applied to human beings by Shakespeare, Scott, and other authors, usually in a figurative way, and in a facetious or derisive sense.

DESPAIRING TED.—If you were on friendly terms with the young lady, there certainly could be nothing wrong in writing such a note. But it may not have reached her, or she may have answered and her letter may have gone astray. The next time you visit the place why not drop in some evening and ask her frankly if she received the invitation?

CONSTANCE.—To make raisin wine, take one pound of white sugar, two pounds of raisins, seeded and chopped; all the juice and half the grated peel of one lemon, and two gallons of boiling water. Put all into a stone jar, and stir every day for a week; then strain and bottle. It will be fit for use in ten days for flavouring if desired.

MARTHA.—Dissolve two ounces borax in three pints of hot water, before it is quite cold add one teaspoonful of tincture of myrrh and one tablespoonful of spirits of camphor, bottle the mixture for use. One wineglass of the above solution added to half a pint of tepid water is sufficient for each application. It cleanses, preserves, and whitens without injury.

ILL-USED WIFE.—A woman is never free to marry again while her husband is alive. If, however, he has deserted her for more than seven years, and she does not know of his whereabouts, or whether he is alive or not, she cannot be punished for bigamy if she marries again; but her husband can always claim her when he returns, and the second marriage is null and void.

DOUBTFUL ONE.—If you have an assured income, however small, it might be well to look up the subject of insurance. Small deposits in banks pay but little interest, and would not furnish the needed provision for a long time to come. While there are some plans of insurance that are the rankest kind of extortion, there are many that may be relied upon.

S. G. P.—There certainly would be no impropriety in calling at the house and sending either your card or, what would be much better, a note asking her to see you. Or you might write a letter, stating that you will call. Then, when you do so, she may receive you or send a message if she does not receive visitors. Unless your errand is one that demands immediate attention, it might be well to wait a little while.

NATALIE.—Take large sweet potatoes, parboil them slightly, and cut them in transverse slices. Prepare a deep baking dish and cover the bottom with a layer of slices; add a little butter and a very little nutmeg. Strew over this a few bits of orange peel and add a little juice of the orange. Fill the dish in like manner, finishing with fine shred of orange peel. Bake until tender, and you will have a dish to satisfy an epicure.

LOREL.—The story of "The Sword of Damocles" is briefly this: Damocles was one of the courtiers of Dionysius the Elder. The former had extolled the happiness of the latter in being a rich king, and Dionysius, desiring to illustrate the uncertainty of that happiness, seated Damocles at a banquet with a naked sword suspended above his head by a single hair.

LAMBERT.—The Indians regarded the so-called Indian summer as the gift of their most honoured deity, the god of the south-west, who sent the south-west winds, and to whom they believed their souls to go after their death. The period referred to is one of warm, pleasant weather. It usually occurs after the autumnal storms, and continues without interruption for two or three weeks.

TOOTH.—The best books for your purpose will be those that are used in the public schools of your own city. Having these, you will find it easier to get a little assistance in case you need it. Why not arrange with some public-school teacher to give you an occasional hour in the evening and talk over the branches you want to study and give you what help you need. This would advance you much more rapidly than you could go alone.

FLOWER-LOVER.—In regard to the time for watering flowers, the evening is generally selected, or about the hour the sun is disappearing. If it has rained all day the watering-pot may be allowed to hang on its peg. Some flowers thrive better by being treated with water than has stood in pails in the sun. It becoming of the right temperature to apply it in the evening. If the flowers are in pots, do not keep them exposed to the sun all the time. There are hours when they should be kept in the shade.

S. M.—Two tablespoonfuls of alcohol, half tablespoonful ammonia, one teaspoonful of either mixed together; lay the mixture on the oil spot, and then take a sponge and clean water and rub and it will disappear; or a simpler receipt is two breakfastspoons of boiling water, half ounce of powdered borax, quarter ounce gum camphor; shake all together in a bottle; it is excellent for washing out grease stains or blacking stains; but ammonia and water alone rubbed on does very well also.

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